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INTRODUCTION.

USEFUL Commentaries, on St. Luke, are those of Godet and of Farrar ("in the Cambridge Bible for Schools"). Foote's "Lectures on St. Luke" may be consulted with advantage; also Mr. Burton's volume on St. Luke in the "Expositor's Bible." Maurice's "Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven" contains some good suggestions.

THE SERMON BIBLE.

ST. LUKE.

REFERENCES: i. 1-4.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 289; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 41. i. 1-5.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 1.

Chap. i., vers. 3, 4.—"It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed."

SCRIPTURE and the Authority of the Church.

I. St. Luke tells Theophilus that it seemed good to him to write in order an account of our Lord's life and death, that Theophilus might know the certainty of those things in which he had been instructed; and this, as a general rule, might well describe one great use of the Scripture to each of us: as individual members of Christ's Church, it enables us to know the certainty of the things in which we have been instructed.

II. Our individual faith, although grounded in the first instance on parental authority, yet rests afterwards on wholly different grounds; namely, on the direct evidence in confirmation of it which is presented to our own minds. But with regard to those who are called the Fathers of the Church, it is contended sometimes that we do receive the Scriptures, in the end, upon their authority; and it is argued that, if their authority is sufficient for so great a thing as this, it must be sufficient for everything else; that if, in short, we believe the Scriptures for their sake, then we ought also to believe other things which they may tell us, even though they are not to be found in Scripture. In this argument there is the great fault that it mistakes the question at the outset. The authority of the Fathers, as they are called, is never to any sound mind the only reason for believing in the Scriptures. In truth, the internal evidence in favour of the authenticity of the Scriptures is that on which the mind can rest with far greater satisfaction than on any external testimonies, however valuable. It has been wonderfully ordered, that the books, generally speaking,

are their own witness. When, therefore, we are told that, as we believe the Scriptures themselves upon tradition, so we should believe other things also, the answer is, that we do not believe the Scriptures either entirely or principally upon what is called tradition; but upon their own internal evidence, and that the opinions of the early Christians, like those of other men, may be very good on certain points, and to a certain degree, without being good in all points and absolutely.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 236.

Chap. i., ver. 5.

MAN'S Extremity—God's Opportunity.

Reflect:—

I. On the low ebb to which the fortunes of the house of Israel were reduced at the period when St. John the Baptist was miraculously born. The very language in which the sacred books are written, had long ceased to be a spoken language. The noble spirit of the ancient days had, in a great measure, died out. The very nationality of the Jews had been broken up. Mixed races inhabited Galilee; aliens dwelt in the cities of Samaria; Judea itself had become a conquered province. An Idumæan was king, and even he was but the viceroy of a higher Gentile power. A Roman governor dwelt at Cæsarea, and had his law court in the capital. The descendants of Abraham were heard to declare: "We have no king but Cæsar."

II. The state of religion and morals. What a degraded people the Jews must have been, that the very ministers of religion should have deserved such reproaches as our Lord showered down upon them in the twenty-third chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel! Their shameful way of evading the law of God—even the law of nature—by a system of quibbling traditions; their shameful violation of the law of marriage; their neglect of the Fifth Commandment; their hollowness about the Fourth; all that happened in the highest quarters in the matter of our Lord's betrayal, death, resurrection, showing such an utter contempt for truth, justice, right;—you cannot read and weigh the story carefully without feeling that the race must have been degraded and corrupt; that, indeed, things had sunk to a miserably low ebb everywhere.

III. Now it was at such a time as this, that the message of the Angel Gabriel to Zacharias, as he officiated in the Temple at Jerusalem, conveyed the first tidings of the coming Gospel. When night was darkest the day began to dawn, and the first

faint streak of light—the harbinger and earnest of the glory that was to follow—was that message of the Angel. The lesson is to us a consolation, a help, and a warning. Be content to leave the future of thy Church, thy country, in the hand of God. In His own good time He will work—work wondrously, but not yet. The night is darkest before the springing of the day. The gathering clouds are meant to conceal the coming glory. Let the shadows, therefore, yet deepen apace, and be thou patient.

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 60.

REFERENCES: i. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 40. i. 6-80.—A. B. Bruce, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 14. i. 8-23.—*Ibid.*, p. 41. i. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 175.

Chap. i., ver. 15.—"He shall be great in the sight of the Lord."

I. WHAT makes people great in the sight of men? Several things do this; but birth, money, and talents are the chief things which give this kind of greatness.

II. What makes people great in the sight of God? It is not any of the things which lead to greatness in man's sight. A person may be born of the greatest king that ever lived, and be as rich as Stephen Gerard, and have many talents, and yet be never great at all in the sight of God. And then, on the other hand, a person may be born in a garret or a cellar, and never have any money to call his own, and no talent at all to to do anything that men call great, and yet may be really great in the sight of the Lord. What made John the Baptist great? And what will make others as great as he was? The answer is—Obedience. It was simply his obedience which led to all John's greatness. He did just what God wanted him to do. He did nothing else, and he did this all the time. And if we obey God, as John did, it will make us great in His sight too. All the greatness which people get in men's sight is little and empty; but it is vast, wonderful, substantial greatness which they get who become great in the sight of God.

III. Why is it better to be great in the sight of the Lord than in the sight of men? We may answer the question by saying that it is so for three reasons. (1) Greatness in God's sight is better than greatness in man's sight because it is more useful. Great men in God's sight are more useful than others by their example. Now the most useful thing that can be done to anybody is to make him a Christian. But there is nothing like the influence of a Christian's example to help to make others

Christians. (2) This greatness is more lasting than the other. Greatness in man's sight—a greatness that connects itself with birth, or money, or talents merely—will soon pass away; but greatness in God's sight—a greatness that connects itself with our being made good and holy—will never pass away. (3) It is within the reach of all. This is not true of greatness in the sight of men, but it is true of greatness in the sight of God. But there were three things in John's case that we must remember if we want to succeed: (1) John began early; (2) John had the Holy Spirit to help him; (3) John gave up everything that was likely to hinder him from becoming great.

R. NEWTON, *Rills from the Fountain of Life*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: i. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 257; J. H. Hancock, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 388; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 216.

Chap. i., ver. 17.—"And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children."

DRAWING Lightning.

The wonderful suggestiveness of this passage is found in its theme. A wild threat, four hundred years old, is suddenly removed in a flash of benediction. The curse in Malachi is omitted in Luke—the lightning is drawn. The Gospel fulfils the law when it accepts children. God receives the fathers into favour and communion again when their hearts are turned to their offspring. This is the doctrine of the text. Hence, I present now as a legitimate subject of consideration the work of the Sunday school organisation; it discharges harmlessly the Old Testament maledictions, and it becomes the instrument of fulfilling the benedictions of the New. It is the world's helper and the Church's servant.

I. The subjects of Sunday school effort are, of course, understood to be the young of our race. Oftentimes these are the least noticed and the last noticed of all classes of beings with souls. And yet there is no truth more settled than that civilisation, chivalry, and Christianity reach their highest culmination in the caring for children.

II. Consider next the nature of the work we desire and propose to do on behalf of children. This is no less than to seek out, to educate, and to redeem children. (1) To seek them out. They must be sought out and brought under the power of the Gospel. They never will be until Christians become more Christlike. Brazilian rivers are full of diamonds; what then? The

costliest jewels will only drift down the current and be lost in the sands, unless somebody goes to crown-making and gathers them carefully up. (2) To educate them becomes another part of this work. There is no agency which is doing more in this direction than the Sunday school. This will appear if you consider the class of instructors, the lesson they inculcate, the text-book they use, and the spirit by which they are actuated. (3) To redeem children, however, is the main end. God converts souls; our office is to lead them up under the force of the means of grace. And is there not in the Sunday school arch a fitting symbol of the Divine promise,—the very bow of the ancient covenant, bending over these young immortals, with its benediction of peace?

C. S. ROBINSON, *Sermons on Neglected Texts*, p. 182.

REFERENCES: i. 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 273. i. 18—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., p. 1,405.

Chap. i., ver. 20.—"And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season."

UNBELIEF and dumbness are as fountain and stream, cause and effect. It is written, observes Paul in his second letter to the Church at Corinth, "I believed, therefore have I spoken;" we also believe, and therefore speak. Faith opens the lips, unbelief closes them. There is a noisy unbelief as well as a dumb unbelief. But the loud unbelief is a general faithlessness in all Divine testimony; while the dumb unbelief is lack of faith in some particular word of God. We are speaking, not of the unbelief of the unbeliever, but of the unbelief of the believer.

I. Not believing God's word about prayer, we cease from it or restrain it. In the first instance, prayer was instinctive. If we believe God's words we can pray. If we believe them cordially, we can pray earnestly. If we believe them but feebly, we pray faintly. If we do not believe them at all, we cease from prayer; and it is most instructive and interesting to observe how, as faith declines, dumbness in prayer creeps over us. "Thou shalt be dumb, because thou believest not my words."

II. Not believing God's words, we are dumb as to praise. We require words of God to expound to us the acts and works of God. Perplexity relaxes, loosens, and entangles the strings of our harp. Faith sets them free, tightens them, tunes them; and faith brings forth triumphan music. We may think the

silence of our harp, and the dumbness of our voice in praise, of but small moment, but God saith, "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me."

III. Not believing God's words, we are dumb as to our testimony to the truth. Truth is communicated and propagated by tradition; by men saying to each other, "Know the Lord," or, "Lo, here is Christ." When a man speaks of that which he believes, an influence goes forth from himself which does not proceed from him when he gives a tract or book, even though it be the Holy Book. "We believe and speak." We lose our faith and are silent.

IV. Not believing God's words we become dumb as to Christian intercourse and fellowship. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another." We speak to the unbeliever to bear witness. Believers speak to one another for mutual edification and consolation, and in the degree of their faith they will speak wisely and well.

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 78.

REFERENCES: i. 20.—Spurgeon, *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 42. i. 21.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 127.

Chap. i., ver. 26.—**"And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth."**

THE purpose of this special embassy of the angel was to announce to the Virgin the exceptional and signal honour to which she had been selected as the mother of the Lord. Through this mysterious relationship she became the source and messenger of rest and holiday to a sin-scourged world. But the picture which the words to which we have limited our text bring before us is that of an angel visiting a city,—a messenger from God coming amongst the crowded habitations of men.

I. Angels have visited great cities on various embassies and with divers missions. The historic page of Scripture is sometimes shaded by the wing of the angel of wrath, and sometimes brightened by the alighting of the angel of light. And, surely, if not visibly, angels are busy upon ministries of favour and beneficence still. Surely the same celestial garrison is on duty now as watched the faithful in time past. Surely there is the same alacrity of service, the same vigilance of guardian jealousy among the shining ones. And, surely, the charge has not been withdrawn which the Lord gives to His angels concerning us, to bear us in their mighty hands, and to minister unto those who are the heirs of salvation.

II. Be this, however, as it may, the mind which is thoughtful, and the heart which is devout, will discern a kind of impersonal angelic ministry in the recurrence of seasons, and in the footsteps of advancing time. If there are tongues in trees and books in the running brooks, surely we may find mouths in the months and lips in the lapsing days. Just as the half-way house invites to rest, so should the sixth month, the half-way month, invite us to a calm revision of our spiritual whereabouts. If June does but come as an angel to your Nazareth to show the Christians' half-way resting-place, and lead you to the Cross again, the straps which bound sin's tonnage to your back shall burst asunder, and you shall stand upright, a freed man in Christ. If you cannot get away from Nazareth with its workshops, let the Workman of Nazareth come and turn Nazareth itself into a resting-place. He will not despise it because it is a place of toil, but will come to work beside you, that you may rest with Him.

A. MURSELL, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 21.

Chap. i., vers. 26-38.

THE Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

I. "The angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth." Never was a time when, humanly speaking, the promises of God might seem so much to have failed: the house of David had departed from the sight of men, was unknown and forgotten, and Israel itself under bondage to the heathen; the prince of this world seemed established above the sanctuary of God. But man's helplessness is God's opportunity, and nothing was lost in His sight; the fulness of the time was come, and it was fitting that the vessel, meet to be the recipient of the Divine grace, should be nurtured, not in kings' palaces, but in obscure poverty: poor in spirit, that hers might be the kingdom of heaven; mourning over the desolations of her household and people, that she might be comforted and their comforter; pure in heart, that she might see God.

II. When Mary saw the angel, "she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." Slight but very beautiful is this indication of the Virgin's mind: "she was troubled," for the humble are troubled when they hear their own praise; and with that peculiar thoughtfulness which marks all that is said of her she cast in her mind what such a salutation should import. Even as at the last, they who shall hear the words, "Come, ye blessed of My

Father," shall say, as it were, "Whence is this voice?" and be even troubled at the saying, as beyond their worthiness.

III. In Mary we see perfect faith, humility, and submission. Calm as deep waters, and thoughtful; as the morning cloud that discloses the rising sun; as the star that first appears when the storm is retiring. Sarah laughed at the strangeness of that salutation beyond all that she looked for; but Mary is composed and reflective, as one that wondered at nothing from the power and the goodness of God. Zacharias doubted, and by a sign was corrected; Mary doubted not, but by a sign was strengthened.

I. WILLIAMS, *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels*, vol. ii., p. 353.

REFERENCES: i. 26.—A. Whyte, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 120. i. 26-38.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 146. i. 28.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 191. i. 31.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons in Marlborough College*, p. 492. i. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,760. i. 34.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,405.

Chap. i., ver. 35.—"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

THE Mystery of the Holy Incarnation.

I. There are beings within the mind's easy conception that far overpass the glories of the statesman and the monarch of our earth. Men of even no extreme ardour of fancy, when once instructed as to the vastness of our universe, have yearned to know of the life and intelligence that animate and that guide those distant regions of creation which science has so abundantly and so wonderfully revealed; and have dared to dream of the communications that might subsist, and that may in another sphere subsist, with the beings of such spheres. Think what it would be to hold high converse with such a delegate of heaven as this; to find this lord of a million worlds the actual inhabitant of our own; to see him and yet to live; to learn the secrets of his immense administration and hear of forms of being of which men can now have no more conception than the insect living on a leaf has of the forest that surrounds him. Still more, to find in this being an interest, a real interest, in the affairs of our little corner of the universe; of that earthly cell which, in point of fact, is absolutely invisible from the nearest fixed star that sparkles in the heavens above us. Nay, to find him willing to throw aside his glorious toils of empire, in order to meditate our welfare,

and dwell among us for a time. This surely would be wondrous, appalling, and yet transporting; such as that, when it had passed away, life would seem to have nothing more it could offer compared to the being blessed with such an intercourse. And now mark—behind all the visible scenery of nature; beyond all the systems of all the stars; around this whole universe, and through the infinity of infinite space itself; from all eternity, and to all eternity,—there lives a Being compared to whom that mighty spirit just described, with his empire of a million suns, is infinitely less than to you is the minutest mote that floats in the sunbeam.

II. The Lord of heaven and earth blended our nature with His own; He took the manhood into God; He bound us up with Himself as one indivisible being; He shared not only our state, but our nature and essence; He took from us a human nature that He might give us a Divine. And remember, further, that this mystery of the God and man is a mystery for everlasting. As there ever has been, and ever will be, the eternal Son of God, so will there ever remain the eternal Son of Man. This blessed union is incapable of dissolution; our immortality is suspended on its continuance; we could not have life eternal unless God were to be man eternal. The firstfruits will remain with the rest of the harvest in glory.

W. ARCHER BUTLER, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, 1st series, p. 16.

REFERENCES: i. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 201; R. Lorimer, *Bible Studies in Life and Truth*, p. 377.

Chap. i., ver. 38.—"And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

THE Call of God.

It was the answer of profound and humble obedience to the greatest call ever addressed from heaven to a mortal creature. The call, sudden, undreamt of, overwhelming,—interrupting in the most startling manner the daily course of an obscure human life, breaking in on its privacy, and laying on it the most awful of charges,—was a call to prepare for being the instrument of the final and complete accomplishment of God's highest words and most amazing work. It is idle, it is profane, to attempt to imagine the mind and soul of a human being like ourselves at such a moment. In its sudden translation and lifting up out of all the ordinary conditions of human life, in the tides of honour and rapture, of crushing shame and consciousness of the Divine election, of possible sacrifice and certain triumph, it could be like

nothing that man has ever gone through. But whatever passed through the mind of that blessed one while the angel's words were setting before her the lot to which she had been appointed, and the place she was to fill in the eternal history, her instant expression of character was that of absolute self-surrender to all that she was called to—of perfect readiness for all that might be required of her. "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

I. One great part of the history of the Bible is the history of calls, widely different indeed in their circumstances, but alike in this, that they were a claim from Almighty God on the will of man for a free and unconditional service. It is the history, too, of the way in which this claim was met; and it was met variously—variously in the perfectness of the response made to it; variously in the struggle and discipline through which God's call at last asserted its supremacy. The calls of God are very various in their circumstances, and they are met in various ways. But wherever they meet us, and in whatever form, there is but one way of meeting them which carries with it blessing and hope,—the way of humble and honest acceptance, of unfeigned self-dedication, of modest and yet resolute determination, of which the highest and purest expression is the answer to the most wonderful call ever made to man. "Be it unto me according to thy word."

II. What is involved in that answer? It is no mere passive resignation and yielding to the Divine call. It is not merely shutting our eyes and saying, "Let what He wills come upon me.' It is more than that. The call comes to living souls, to human consciences, to human wills, to human purpose. It asks for more than acquiescence and submission. It asks for conscious, deliberate union with the Divine will. It asks that we should associate and identify our own real wishes and desires with what we know of our Master's; and that we should work in His cause, as all men work for a cause they have at heart. It is the response of the obedient and ready *will*. It is the response of the soul which is its own master, feeling itself summoned to fulfil the end of its being—to be that link in the chain of God's designs, for which it was created, and for which life and spirit and reason were given it. It is the taking upon us the charge which it has pleased God to assign us, with its conditions, its responsibilities, its ventures. It is the offering up of what we are, to do our best for our Master.

R. W. CHURCH, *Human Life and Its Conditions*, p. 172.

THE Humility of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Humility is not a mere depression of a proud and strong will, not a mere acquiescence in the stronger will of an almighty Lord, but when carried out to perfection it is an absence of all self-will in the presence of God, –a clear, colourless transparency of soul, through which the light of God's will has liberty to shine and extinguish every other radiance. You know how slight a thing will tinge the ray of sunlight, and give it a tone of colour not its own. A single vine-leaf in the sun will let the ray pass freely through, but gives it in its passage that lovely colour of golden green. On the other hand, the clear atmosphere of a sky recently drained by heavy showers lets the pure sunlight live in it alone. Then you are sensible of mere light, void of all colour; it is light in air. Of such a quality was the humility of the Virgin Mary, pure air for the light of God to live in.

I. No notice, it appears, was given to the Blessed Virgin before the anouncement of the angel. And when he announced the birth of Christ and the supernatural manner of it, she answered in these simple holy words, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." She was secure in the deep composure and humility of her heart. The angel folded his golden wings before her, and the radiance of his presence filled the corners of the narrow room; but she, as if she were used to angels' visits, received him gently, admitting freely through her ears and heart the gracious message of her Lord.

II. The next event mentioned is her visit to Elisabeth. In her hymn, the *Magnificat*, we observe that the two first verses only speak of herself, and then as pouring out her praise to God, while the rest without exception declare the mighty works of God, a mightiness shown in His mercy towards them that humble themselves.

III. After this event there follow others, where glory and pain interchange with one another; and all of these, with scarcely an exception, are trying to her temper of humility. But the blessed mother took all that came gently, cheerfully, humbly. She could not be surprised, for her heart was awake always to follow the indications of God's will. "Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." May we have grace to follow her example who was blessed because she believed; and whose life on earth is a splendid instance of

God's eternal law, He "resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 285.

REFERENCES: i. 38.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 89. T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 324. i. 43.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iv.,p. 40.

Chap. i., ver. 46.—"My soul doth magnify the Lord."

I. How the Blessed Virgin was engaged when the Angel Gabriel came in unto her, with his famous words of heavenly salutation on his lips, we know not. We do but know that she was *within*, and we picture the maiden's astonishment to be so found out in her privacy; and so addressed, amid the modest simplicity, not to say the poverty, of her home. Very singular are the evidences in Scripture of the maidenly reserve and thoughtfulness of Mary,—those indications of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. "In her we have the outline of all that is best in woman's nature,—habitual modesty, reserve, quietness, thoughtfulness; yet, if need be, love strong in death, and ability to suffer things which sterner natures shrink from. Above all, you have that holiness of heart which brings angels down from heaven to be its companions; yea, with which God Himself is content to come down from heaven to dwell."

II. We should seek to realise the solemn truth that in Mary the act of our first mother was in a manner reversed, and the penalty done away; that in her person we behold a woman bringing joy to the whole human race, as in the person of Eve we behold a woman bringing a perpetual heritage of woe. This is no mere historical fact, much less a mere theological speculation. As a matter of daily experience, we owe to the share which the Blessed Virgin was made to sustain in the economy of man's redemption the place which woman now occupies in the social scale. Whatever graces of man's character are symbolised by such Christian epithets as chivalrous and loyal are all an after-growth,—unknown to the old world, but grafted, so to speak, on to our renewed nature in Christ. The language of the old world had no name for such things. And why not? Simply because anciently such things were not! I am not saying that there was no filial piety and conjugal faithfulness and sincere attachment in the old days of classic Greece and Rome. But I am saying that all these relations—the relation of the child to the parent, of the husband to his wife—have assumed

a far deeper, far loftier, far purer character, because they had received a sacred impress, since Christianity came into the world. And what, I ask, what restored the balance, re-adjusted the disturbed condition of the problem, and, in a word, made us what we are? The beginning of the whole matter is found in our text.

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 33.

Chap. i., vers. 46, 47.

THE Soul rejoicing in God. These words express:—

I. The satisfaction which man's reason experiences at contact with God. God satisfies some of the deepest yearnings of our intellectual nature. For instance, all men and women who think at all desire, if they can, to refer the various facts and objects which meet them when they look out from themselves upon life to some common principle, to some all-comprehending law, under which each can be set in its proper place,—some law which will harmonise all, explain all, adjust what seems at variance, interpret what appears to be irregular, by the light poured upon all from a higher unity. God—the supreme Author and End of all existence—satisfies the intellectual demand of the human soul, which can be satisfied by none less than God. God furnishes the soul with the secret of the unity of all existence; and man, in the joy of this profound satisfaction offered to his reason, exclaims, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

II. But the words express also the satisfaction which God yields to another part of our spiritual being—the affections on the emotions. Among these look: (1) at the emotion of awe. Why are we men drawn, we scarcely know how or why, towards what is sublime or magnificent? Stern determination, great vigour of will, have an attraction for the majority of men. Most of us are irresistibly attracted towards that which is higher, greater, stronger, than ourselves. It was this principle which led the heathen nations of antiquity to give Divine honours to men whom they considered extremely eminent; but in reality this enthusiasm for greatness can be satisfied only in Him who alone is great—great in Himself, and not by the bequest of another. (2) We all feel, in various degrees, the love of beauty. It is He, depend upon it, it is He whose presence penetrates us at all the pores of our being which are alive to the sense of beauty in the world of nature and the world of thought. (3)

God satisfies our filial affection. When we have found Him —the parent who unites a father's authority with a mother's tenderness, it is natural to exclaim, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

III. Note a third satisfaction which God yields to our spiritual nature. He supports and justifies conscience. He gives to conscience basis, firmness, consistency. He relieves its anxieties; He reconciles by a fuller revelation its questionings about Himself. Conscience incessantly chants before the Cross that it magnifies the Lord, and that it rejoices in God its Saviour.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 671.

Chap. i., vers. 46-8.

THE Reverence due to the Blessed Virgin. Note:—

I. The singular beauty and purity and steadiness of character which are manifested in those passages of St. Mary's life which come before us in the Gospels. (1) The first point I will mention is, the remarkable faith with which she received the annunciation from the angel of the wonderful event which was to take place; her words are very simple and very full of faith,—"Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." (2) Again, the manner in which, as we read, Mary pondered in her heart the various events of the Lord's childhood, which seemed to point out her Son as being greater than even she herself had suspected, is worthy of notice, as being precisely that which befits religious character of the highest order. (3) The same religious discretion marked her conduct on the occasion of her losing sight of Jesus on their return from Jerusalem when He was twelve years old. His answer might well add to His parents' perplexity, and His mother does not seem to have understood it; but she did not forget the saying because she could not understand it; on the other hand, she kept it in her heart.

II. But it is not her own excellence which specially exalts the Blessed Virgin; it is the honour which was put upon her, independently of all merit of her own. We need not flinch from according to St. Mary the honours which belong to her. "All generations shall call me blessed," says the text; and we must have dull hearts if we do not so account her; and as we honour the Apostles because they were very near to, and much honoured by, the Lord, without asserting that they have any actual relation to God which we may not have, so may we

rightly honour the Virgin Mother of Christ, without any extravagant views of her nature as being different from, or higher than, our own. While we reverence St. Mary as one of the first of saints, while we call her blessed, and think her the most highly honoured of the human race, we shall still feel no temptation in our hearts to worship her, provided we have our whole souls filled with the contemplation of the Saviour Jesus Christ.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 294.

REFERENCES: i. 46.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,614. i. 46, 47.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., No. 606; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 133. i. 46-55.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 42. i. 48.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 157. i. 49-50.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 327.

Chap. i., ver. 53.—"He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich He hath sent empty away."

I. WHEN Mary announces the reward of spiritual hunger and the punishment of spiritual satisfaction with self, she touches upon a principle of very wide range, applicable to the needs of mental, of moral, of physical life. If a living being is to benefit by nourishment, whether in body, mind, or spirit, that being must welcome its nourishment by active desire, by appetite. This is plain enough in the life of the body. Food, we all know, as a rule, benefits neither man nor beast unless there be relish or appetite for it. So again with mental life, whether in a man or a child. If knowledge is to do good; if the mind is to digest and make knowledge its own, then there must be a desire or appetite for it. If the mind have no thirst or appetite for knowledge, it will be sent empty away from the choicest library, from the most gifted teachers. Nothing can compensate for the absence of intellectual appetite. And this is also true of the spiritual world. What food is to the body; what useful information or speculative thought is to the mind of man; that religious truth and the supernatural grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ are to man's highest nature, to his undying personality, to his spirit. Religious truth forced upon a soul which has no desire for it does not illuminate,—it only provokes a secret or avowed hostility. The soul must desire God as its true life, its true force, if God is to enlighten and strengthen it. Without this desire He will do nothing for it. It will be sent empty away.

II. God gives to every single human soul a sort of provisional or preliminary endowment, which creates in the soul a longing

for Himself. Even when our Lord stood before the Jewish people with His startling miracles; with His words such as never man spake; with the play and impress of a character that was unique and incomparable,—He knew and said that this alone would not exert over any human soul that decisive influence which results in conversion. "No man," He said, "can come to Me except the Father which hath sent Me draw him." This drawing—this original inward impulse towards religious truth and grace—is what we commonly call preventive grace. Like other tastes, a hunger for spiritual things is, to a great extent, within our power to encourage or repress, although at first it is the gift of God. There are many forms of appetite which we can well dispense with; with this, never. There are many banquets from which with impunity we may be sent empty away; from this, never. We cannot afford the eternal loss of God. Let us ask Him to give us a strong desire to enjoy Him for ever. He will do for us what He has done for thousands before us: He will give us this hunger here and its reward hereafter.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 900.

REFERENCES: i. 53.—*Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 42. i. 57-80.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 338.

Chap. i., ver. 64.—"And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God."

DUMBNESS removed by God.

The subject suggested by these words is, praise of God the fruit of sight and of present enjoyment. We are not to rest our praises on that which was and on that which shall be, but we have abundant material in that which is now.

I. Present reasons for praise: (1) The works of God. (2) The providence and government of God. (3) The gift to us of blessings for which we have had a strong desire, natural or acquired. (4) The gift of things which we have earnestly and importunately prayed for. (5) Gifts sought, but not found until after many days. These are as springs and wells to the traveller disappointed by the mirage. (6) Blessings remaining for a time in promise, and then being brought forth to our possession. (7) Good things, full of the power of doing good to others. (8) Hopes fructifying in possession and in enjoyment. (9) Visions of life and dreams of life changed into life actual and real. (10) Each particular day's blessings.

II. Restraints of prayer removed. This is effected by the

strengthening of our faith, and by the enlarging of our hope, and by the increase of our love, and by the perfecting of our joy. Free praise! (1) This cannot be enclosed in forms, or imprisoned in psalms and hymns. (2) This has no hampering relations with time and place. It is in season winter and spring, summer and autumn. (3) It is beyond the imprisoning fingers of our fellow-men. (4) It involves freedom from ourselves. Praise ejects selfishness, and brings within proper bounds our self-love. In praise we think of the giver rather than of the gift. (5) It banishes littleness from life. (6) It sanctifies the worshipper. (7) It prepares and trains for free praise in heaven. Free praise comes from the Lord's freed men. Free praise is one fruit of the liberty of the sons of God. Free praise is cherished by the "mercies that are new every morning, and fresh every evening."

S. MARTIN, *Comfort in Trouble*, p. 90.

REFERENCES: i. 64.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 524. i. 65, 66.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 247. i. 66.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 365. i. 68.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 64. i. 76.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. i., p. 219. i. 77-9. Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,907; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 93.

Chap. i., ver. 78.—"**The Dayspring from on high hath visited us.**"

THERE are four things which always attend the dayspring's visit, or the coming of the morning; and when Jesus came into our world He brought these four things; and when He comes into our souls He brings them there too.

I. The first thing that the visit of the dayspring brings with it is Light. In the very next verse Zacharias goes on to show that this would be the effect of Christ's coming into the world. The object of that coming will be to give light to them that sit in darkness and the shadow of death. When Christ came into the world, He brought light into it; and it is so still wherever He comes with His Gospel. The business of those who are children of light is to scatter the light around them. There are two ways of doing this. One is by our example; the other is by helping to send the Gospel to those who are in darkness.

II. Beauty attends the dayspring when it comes. And when Jesus, "the Dayspring from on high," visited our world, He brought beauty with Him, and spread it around Him everywhere. He was spreading beauty around Him by the miracles He performed every day. When He healed the sick, and

raised the dead ; when He made the lame to walk, and the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak,—He was really giving beauty for ashes. When He comes into the souls of His people, He comes to make them beautiful, because He comes to make them like Himself.

III. The third thing that follows when the dayspring appears is Joy. The prophet Isaiah speaks of Christ as appearing to the joy of His people. It was so when He first appeared. And now when He comes into any heart, any home, any neighbourhood, He always brings joy with Him. The Dayspring's coming causes joy in two ways : the first is, by what He does for us ; the second, by what He helps us to do for others.

IV. There is one other thing that always follows when the morning comes and the dayspring visits us, and that is Activity. When morning comes men wake from their sleep, and go forth to the labours and duties of another day. And so the dayspring, or the morning, when it comes, leads to activity. It was night in the world before Jesus entered it. And it is night in our souls till Jesus comes into them. But Jesus came, as the dayspring, to waken men out of sleep, and stir them up to activity, in working for their souls and for heaven. When He comes into our souls to dwell there, it is like morning coming after a long night. Then we begin to see what Jesus has done for us. We see His wonderful love, and the thought of that love stirs our hearts and souls to be active in His service.

R. NEWTON, *Pebbles from the Brook*, p. 50.

Chap. i., vers. 78, 79.—"**The Dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.**"

CHRIST, the Ideal Man.

Man needs a perfect ideal,—an ideal that shall permanently defy criticism, a sample of what human goodness is in its truth and its completeness. We are sure—we men—that there is such a thing as this. How else, we ask, should there be so universal an aspiration towards that which would, upon this hypothesis, have no existence in fact ? It is our Lord, and our Lord alone, who satisfies this human want of an ideal of goodness. He shows us what human goodness was meant to be. He offers us, in His life, the ideal life,—the life of man at his best, in his perfection.

I. In the ideal which His life presents to us, let us observe, first, the absence of any disturbing flaw. In the midst of a

soiled and sinful world, He alone is absolutely sinless. He, too, is tempted, as was Adam. Unlike Adam, He resists temptation. We shall seek in vain for any trace of evil in that perfect Life, —for any word, any action, any gesture or movement which implies a will averted from good, which implies sin. He challenges His contemporaries to convince Him of sin if they could. The human conscience in all ages, like the conscience of His contemporaries, listens to that astonishing question in reverent silence, and whispers to itself, "He—He has a right to ask it, for He—He alone is without sin."

II. The ideal of goodness presented to us by our Lord is perfectly harmonious. We see in Him nothing of the narrowness or the one-sidedness which is traceable, more or less, in all merely great men. As a rule, we men can only appropriate one part of goodness at the cost of the rest. In our Lord there is no one predominating virtue that throws others into the shade. Every excellence is adjusted, balanced, illustrated, by other excellences. He is in His character, and as by the terms of His mediatorial office, at once the Lamb led forth to sacrifice withal the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

III. The type of goodness presented to us in the life of Jesus is a strictly universal type. It is flavoured, so to speak, by no race or clime or sect. He speaks to the human soul in all countries and ages with the authority of one in whom every soul finds at last its ideal representative. And if any have dared, of His grace, to say, with His Apostles, "Be ye followers of me," they have quickly added, "Even as I also am of Christ."

H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 764.

Christ, the Authoritative Teacher.

I. We see in Christ the authority of certain knowledge. The Scribes argued, conjectured, balanced this interpretation against that; this tradition against the other. They were often learned and laborious, but they dealt with religion only as antiquarians might deal with old ruins or manuscripts, so that when it reached the people the underlying elements of truth were overlaid with a mass of doubtful disputations, of which none could see the precise value or drift. When, then, our Lord spoke with clear distinctness, as one who saw spiritual truth, who took the exact measure of the seen and of the unseen, who described without any ambiguities what He saw,—the effect was so fresh and so unlooked for as to create the astonishment which

St. Matthew describes. Jesus, with His "Verily, verily, I say unto you," is the Teacher of teachers,—the most authoritative Teacher, pouring forth a flood of light upon all the great problems of human interest.

II. Observe in Him, too, that authority which among religious teachers has been comparatively rare. Many a man will occasionally say strong or paradoxical things, who is by no means continually fearless. If he fears not the world at large, or his declared opponents, he fears his friends, his supporters, his patrons. He fears them too much to risk their goodwill by telling them unpopular truth. Here, as elsewhere, our Lord is above all. Look at the Sermon on the Mount, in which the most comfortable glosses on the old awful law of Sinai are sternly exposed and set aside; in which the exigency of its spirit as distinct from the easy obedience to its literal requirements is insisted on; in which, as afterwards in those discourses reported by St. John, before the climax of the Passion, the great authority of the most powerful classes of Jerusalem is confronted with uncompromising resistance. Jesus enunciated truth as depending on its internal strength, harmony, necessity; as being no passing or local influence like opinion, but unchanging, eternal, and dear to God; and whether in the triumphs of its representatives, or their failure,—aye, their martyrdom,—holding from God a charter of ultimate victory.

III. Observe in Him, lastly, the authority of His pure, disinterested love. We miss in the prophets that tender love of individual souls which is so conspicuous in our Lord as a teacher. While His horizon of activity and aim is infinitely greater than theirs; while He is gazing steadily on a vast future of which they had only dim and imperfect presentiments, He devotes Himself, we may dare to say, to a publican, to a Syrophenician stranger, to a Nicodemus, to a Samaritan woman, to a family at Bethany, as if, for the time being, there were none others in the world to engage His attention. Nowhere, perhaps, is this aspect of His teaching so prominent as in His last discourse in the supper-room—the language, as that is, of the uncreated love speaking directly to human hearts in words which, at the distance of eighteen centuries, retain this, the secret of their matchless authority.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 768.

CHRIST, the Giver of Grace.

Living, as we do, in an age which is pre-eminently devoted to the philosophy of experience, we may be disposed to look askance

at such a conception as that of grace. We do not see grace; we cannot catch it—examine it through a microscope. We only note that there are effects which presuppose some such cause, and then revelation steps in and tells us that that is the cause. First of all men noted the effects of grace; then they were informed of its reality, its source, its power. But in itself, and to the last, grace remains invisible,—invisible like the electric fluid, or like the force of attraction; yet assuredly, in the world of spirits, at least as real, at least as energetic, a force as they.

I. Jesus Christ reveals to us the nature, and He secures to us the gift, of supernatural grace. The immediate minister of grace is revealed as the holy and eternal Spirit. As from all eternity the Holy Spirit is revealed as proceeding from the Son as from the Father, so in time the Spirit is sent, not merely by the Father, but by the Son.

II. We are taught how it is that grace acts upon us, what is the secret of its enabling power. Never acting apart from Christ, the Spirit unites us to, makes us partake in, this Divine humanity, in the glorified human nature of the ascended Son of God. The Spirit's work is to unite us to Christ, to robe us in our Lord's perfect nature,—that new nature whereby the Second Adam would repair, and more than repair, what the first had lost. The Eternal Spirit does not act apart. He sets up in the Church and in the heart an inward presence, but that presence is the presence, not of Himself only, but of the Son of Man.

III. We Christians are taught that the certificated points of conduct—so to call them—with this stream of grace, administered by the Spirit and consisting in union with the manhood of our Lord, are the Christian Sacraments. The Gospel differs from the law as a substance differs from the shadow, and sacraments which are symbols, and nothing but symbols, are in no way better than the legal ordinances which preceded them, and therefore have no place in a system like that of the Gospel of Christ, where all is real. Christ's command to baptize all nations, and to do what He did in the supper-room to the end of time, of itself implies that the sacraments are solemn realities,—acts on His part toward us, and not mere instruments for raising our thoughts towards Him.

H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 788.

Christ, the Deliverer and Restorer.

Our Lord comes into the world, not merely to teach us how to live, not merely to lighten up the dark secrets of our existence and our destiny, but to take away our sins. He is a revelation

alike of love and of justice, and of the true term of the reconciliation of love with justice in the counsels of God. The old moral law still holds, "The wages of sin is death." But the new revelation is, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish." And if it be asked, "How can He possibly stand in this relationship towards man?"—we answer it briefly as follows:—

I. In the first place He is qualified for it as the sinless One—the one sample in all history of an entirely spotless manhood. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." One stain would have impaired His capacity for pleading for mercy on a world of sinners.

II. He is qualified for this work as the representative of man. It was not a distinct personal man, it was human nature, which the personal Son of God wrapped around Himself, that He might be, not one among many, but the natural representative of all. The acts and words of His life were representative. His active obedience is, if we will, ours. Purified, restored, believing humanity—restored and purified because believing—acts and speaks in Jesus; and before the eternal purity all the new generations of men are "accepted in the Beloved."

III. He was qualified for this work by offering Himself, voluntarily, to suffer. The notion of injustice attaching to the Atonement proceeds upon the idea—the grave misapprehension—that Jesus was dragged against His will to Calvary, just as the sacrificial beasts of the old covenant were driven to the altar. He was offered because it was His own will. There is all the difference in the world between a victim whose life is wrung out of him and a soldier who freely devotes himself to death.

IV. He was qualified for this tremendous work as more—infinitely more—than man. The value of the death of Christ extending itself in His intention, we know, to the whole human family, in all ages of the world, depends upon the fact that He is the Eternal Son of God. And hence every act and suffering of His is weighted, so to speak, with infinity.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 770.

REFERENCES: i. 78, 79.—E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 66; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 174; J. Bagot, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 13. i. 80.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 497. i.-ii.—E. C. Gibson, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 116.

Chap. ii., vers. 1-7.—"And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed," etc.

THE Child and the Emperor.

I. "It came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed." In the original meaning of these words, they express the fact that it is by the vast network, so to speak, of the Imperial Government at Rome, reaching to every corner of the Empire, that the humble family at Nazareth were drawn from their home in the Galilean hills to the birthplace, or city, of David at Bethlehem. But there are a solemn march and swell in the words, that give them a fuller and ampler scope. It was not without reason, that in the earlier ages this portion of Scripture was read publicly in the churches on Christmas Day, by kings and emperors. It was felt truly that the words awakened the sense of the great historical personages and events in the midst of which Christianity was born. They gave us a thread, slight indeed in itself, but forming part of a vast tissue which bound the cradle of Bethlehem—the birth, the growth of Christianity, round the throne of the imperial Cæsar.

II. Born under the empire, there was in Jesus Christ nothing imperial, except the greatness of His birth. Born under the Roman sway, there was nothing in Him Roman, except the world-wide dominion of His Spirit. Born in the first century, He belongs more to the full development of the nineteenth century than He does to the imperfections of the first. This, then, is the double principle of which the event of Christmas Day is the most striking example; external circumstances are something, but they are not everything. The inward life is the essential thing; but for its successful growth it needs external circumstance. The main element in the foundation—the main pledge for the future progress of Christianity—was the character, the personal character, of its Founder. Had Christ been other than He was, had He been a mere spectre or phantasm, however Divine, such as He is represented in some well-known systems, without human affection, or persuasive words, or energetic actions, or constraining will, the course of the empire would have rolled on its way, and His place in history and in the hearts of men would have been unknown. But being what He was—the impersonation of goodness and truth, containing within Himself all those elements of character which win, convince,

stimulate mankind—His religion, so far as it was derived from Himself, became all-pervading and all-embracing.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 401.

REFERENCES: ii. 1.—W. Leask, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 283. ii. 1-20.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 10. ii. 5-8.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 55. ii. 6, 7.—G. B. Ryley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 410.

Chap. ii., ver. 7.

CHRIST waiting to find room.

In the birth and birthplace of Jesus there is something beautifully correspondent with His personal fortunes, afterwards also of the fortunes of His Gospel. Even down to our own age and times He comes into the world, as it were, to the taxing, and there is scant room for Him even at that.

I. The reason why Jesus cannot find room for His Gospel is closely analogous to that which He encountered in His birth—viz. that men's hearts are preoccupied. They do not care, in general, to put any indignity on Christ; they would prefer not to do it; but they are filled to the full with their own subjects already.

II. If we speak of what is called Christendom, comprising, as it does, all the most civilised and powerful nations of mankind, those most forward in learning, and science, and art, and commerce, it may well enough seem to us when they fix the name Christendom—Christ dominion—on these great powers of the earth, that Christ has certainly gotten room, so far, to enter and be glorified in human society. And it is a very great thing, doubtless, for Christ to be so far admitted to His kingly honours; more, however, as a token of what will sometime appear than as a measure of power already exerted. Still, what multitudes of outlying populations there are that have never heard of Him. And the states and populations that acknowledge Him, how little of Christ, take them all together, appears to be really in them. Now and then a saint appears, a real Christly man, but the general mass are sharp for money and dull to Christ.

III. Our Gospel fails hitherto of all its due honours, because we so poorly represent the worth and largeness of it. What multitudes are there under the name of disciples, who maintain a Christian figure securely up to the line of common respect—penurious, little, mean, sordid, foul in their imaginations, low-minded, coarse-minded every way! The work, however fitly ordered as respects the machinery, lingers till Christ gets room

to be a more complete inspiration in His followers. They give Him the stable, when they ought to be giving Him the inn.

H. BUSHNELL, *Christ and His Salvation*, p. 1.

So, by the ordering of Providence, that fell out at Bethlehem which was to foreshadow all that has happened since. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not."

I. At Bethlehem it was but an ordinary accident. The very limited means of accommodation in a poor village had been extended as far as they would go. Those who came first would be first served, and those who could pay the best would be most carefully attended to. The travellers were not bidden to go elsewhere; they were not left in the street to seek lodging on a winter's night; what could not be found in the house might, since nothing better could be offered, be found in an outhouse. And so the Saviour of the world was born in a stable, and cradled in a manger.

II. What occurred then undesignedly has been repeated of deliberate intention ever since. That inn at Bethlehem was the type and similitude, to a greater or less degree, of every human heart that has ever beaten since. Who is there but must be constrained to own that while his heart has been swept and garnished for other guests, and all its chambers filled, the poorest, narrowest, least-honoured place about it has been allotted to Jesus? The lamentable but plain truth is this, that from first to last the world which He has made has found no room for God.

III. Let us try to realise who it is that knocks at our hearts, and for whom we are unwilling or careless to find room. It is the majesty and awfulness of the Guest that seeks admission—the awfulness of such an Indwelling Presence—the restraints which it involves and lays upon us—which cause us to shrink from the contemplation of it, and to share the feeling of the Apostle when he exclaimed, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" But is He to seek admission, and are we so say that we have "no room?" That be far from us! Let us welcome Him without reserve, and His love and grace will do the rest.

F. E. PAGET, *Helps and Hindrances to the Christian Life*, vol. i., p. 30.

REFERENCES: ii. 7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 343, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 13; *Homiletic Quarterly*,

vol. ii., p. 520; vol. iii., p. 333; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 485; E. J. Hardy, *Faint yet Pursuing*, p. 151; J. Keble, *Sermons from Christmas to Epiphany*, p. 97; H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 24.

Chap. ii., vers. 8, 9.—"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night," etc.

WHILST there is a striking contrast, between the Divine dignity of our Lord and the lowly earthly circumstances of His birth, there is at the same time a no less striking harmony between the events, and dispositions, and persons attending it. The time, the place, the tidings, the listeners, are all in unison. The shepherds were upon historic ground. On those same slopes, on those same hillsides, David of old had fed his father's flocks; and it was from those same fields that he went forth at God's command to change his shepherd's crook for the royal sceptre; and his lowly dress for the purple of a king. When the angels came to earth, they came to the peaceful hillsides, where the dew was upon the grass, and the flock was sleeping in the fold; and there to humble and prepared hearts they gave their message and revealed their glory.

I. And that humble shepherds were the first to receive the glad tidings is as instructive as it is strange. It shows us plainly that there is no respect of persons with God; that in His eye the loftiest and the lowliest are as one; that in the blessings of the everlasting Gospel there is no difference between the monarch on the throne, and the beggar on the dunghill.

II. Not only was the message of the angel given to shepherds, it was given to them whilst they were pursuing their work. Idle men do not receive visions. Industry rather than idleness qualifies for the blessing of God. These were not the kind of men to start at shadows. They were strong, sturdy men, holding a position of danger and difficulty, and yet their humble hearts were waiting upon the Lord.

III. The shepherds at first were "sore afraid." "Flesh and blood were not made to inherit the kingdom of heaven," and thus the "mercifulness of God is seen in the very commonplaces of life." The shaded light, the veiled heaven, the hidden glory, testify as much to His goodness as the open vision and the third-heaven revelation. But the fear of the shepherds soon gave place to action; they took the proper attitude to the Divine announcement, they instantly believed it. How different this journey of the shepherds to the manger, from the hasting of the disciples afterwards to the tomb! These men went "to see

the thing which had come to pass," but when Peter and John ran to the sepulchre it was to see if it had come to pass; and the one journey was marked by confidence and truthfulness, while the other was all impatience and haste.

H. WONNACOTT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 285.

Chap. ii., vers. 8-11.

THE Great Joy of Christmas.

When we hear an angel from heaven declaring good tidings of great joy, which should be to all people, the heart is straightway set on remembering how wondrous true this declaration of his has proved already; set on considering how infallibly true it will prove to the end. The fountain head of the river of our bliss is the manger at Bethlehem. Every separate stream of our rejoicing is to be traced back thither. The source and beginning of it all is in the Infant Saviour, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, and why?

I. Because He is the pledge of God's forgiveness and of God's love towards man. We were before at emnity with God. We lay under a curse. The sentence of death had been passed on all our race. Behold the beginning of the undoing of the curse, the dawn of light and life to a dead and benighted world. All saving mysteries were contained in Christ's Incarnation—somewhat as a forest may be said to be contained in an acorn. And hence first it is that Christmas is the season of our greatest joy.

II. Immediately out of this flows our gratitude as a Church. For do let us consider what was the condition of the world till Christ was born. On one nation only, and that the smallest, had the dew of the Divine blessing as yet descended. What had we been in this far land, but for the substance of the angels' message to the shepherds?

III. As individuals, we find here our personal grounds of gratitude and rejoicing: for Christ's coming into the world it was which hallowed every relationship, and blessed every age and estate. By His precepts, His example, His grace, He has guided us through life's mazy path; planted in us high principles of action and the very divinest motives; sanctified affliction, and sweetened sorrow, and beatified poverty, and made infancy most precious, and old age most honourable.

IV. Then, lastly, consider how entirely from the coming of Christ in the flesh it comes to pass that the mourner learns to dry his tears. This privilege of Christian faith and hope was

unknown to the heathen. But now the daystar arises in the darkest season of bereavement, and (as on summer nights) there is a token of the morning almost before the hour of sunset has quite passed away. And if the progress of decay in ourselves, and the prospect of death is not very terrible—whence is it, but because as on this day was born to us a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord? In Him we know that we are more than conquerors. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me."

J. W. BURGON, *Ninety-one Short Sermons*, No. 11.

REFERENCE: ii. 8-14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 439.

Chap. ii., ver. 10.—**"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."**

THE days of life are not lived on one level range. There are days that are lifted, and days that are depressed; days which stand out radiant with opportunity, as summits of mountains stand forth to the eye when the sun shines upon them. When Christianity was born a sun rose into the darkness of the world. Men saw what they had felt must be, but what they had never before seen.

I. Chiefest among all sights revealed stood God. The heaven was no longer a vacuum; the spaces beyond the sight of the eye, were no longer a mockery. Within the heavens and filling them there was Deity, and through the farther spaces they were told that that Deity at death would receive them, as children are received to a home. As the stars move round the sun, so do the souls of men revolve round their Deity. We are tied to our spiritual orbits by our knowledge of God; we should become vagrant with the intellectual and spiritual vagrancy of the old-time heathenism if the impelling, guiding, controlling influence which God, through our knowledge of Him, puts ceaselessly upon us, were intermitted.

II. The first reason, then, why Christianity is glad news is, because it revealed God to man; and the second and emphatic reason is, as it seems to me, because it revealed man to himself. Never till Jesus was born, and never till He had lived and passed away, did man know the nobility of his species. Never until God dwelt in the flesh could any man know what flesh might become. Never until the fulness of God was in man bodily,

might the race get even a hint of that Divine receptiveness that above all else, perhaps, most nobly characterises human nature. Man had been one sort of a being before Christ came; after that, he was another sort of a being. The birth at Bethlehem gave a new significance to birth, made motherhood a new thing, and gave fatherhood a larger sanctity; Christ showed what man might be, and thereby fixed his value.

III. The third great reason why Christianity is glad news, is found in the fact that it reveals God in man, The proclamation of the angels is confirmed in our experience, and corroborated by our knowledge, that the birth of Christianity was indeed glad news unto men, because it brought God out of distance and darkness into light, and made Him nigh, as He is nigh who shares our burdens, consoles our sorrows, and in every pinch and stress of disastrous fortune, rescues us from peril and saves us from loss.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 201.

Chap. ii., vers. 10, 11.

WHEN Jesus was born, the possibilities of human nature began to be realised. Humanity took a new start. The highest hope of all time was realised, and the possibilities of human nature had expression. Christianity comes to every one of us as an inspiration. It hangs, a star in the darkened sky of our lives. Jesus had faith in Himself, and therefore He had faith in the race to which He belonged. He knew that His own capacities typed the capacities of mankind. And on this He built His hope when He said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men unto Me."

I. Observe the universality of the good tidings. The angel said, "I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Jesus, in birth, became an organic member of the race. His connection was race-wide: He was brother to humanity everywhere. Within the circle of His sublime brotherhood stand peasant and king, serf and czar. The relationship which every person sustains to the Saviour overwhelms all earthly distinctions.

II. Christianity relates not only to the future of mankind, but to the present. It is not an arrangement of forces which shall begin to operate upon man when he has passed out of the body, but an arrangement to operate upon him while in the body. It teaches us earthly duties. It controls the daily adjustments of our lives. It is a thing of to-day, rather than of to-morrow.

III. When we consider what the birth of Jesus meant, in its application to human progress, we can well understand why the angels should call it tidings of great joy. For the birth of such a Being should mean nothing less than joy to man. A clear, hopeful, joyful spirit animates all Gospel history. It sounds out through the promises of Jesus; it speaks in His invitations; it rises like a strain of sweetest music in the Beatitudes; it can be distinguished even in His warnings. And the strong clear notes of hope and gladness, sounded first in Him at His departure into heaven, His disciples took up and prolonged. The fact that music has always been the handmaid of our religion is in itself sufficient to characterise that religion as impulsively happy and emotionally jubilant. Music cannot survive on grief. The fact that the Bible is a book of music is enough to characterise the religion that it teaches us. The fact that heaven would be imperfect without its harp reveals to us that religion is not only happy in its origin and progress, but happier still in its culmination.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 485.

CONSIDER why the proclamation of Christ's birth should be an occasion of joy.

I. Because Christ came to make atonement for the world's guilt and sin. The greatest plague a man can have is the plague of a guilty conscience. Most other miseries may, by skill and time, be removed, and all come to an end in the grave. But a guilty conscience is something no one can remove, either from himself or from others. This forms its peculiar sting—that after death it pursues to the judgment-seat, and will torment us in the abodes of despair. And so the fact, that, in Jesus Christ, His incarnation and death, we have an antidote for the uneasiness of a guilty conscience, ought to lessen, yea to allay altogether, the disquiet of the guilty soul that has received the good tidings of great joy.

II. Christ's birth is good tidings of great joy, because it is the coming to us of a loving and joy-giving Friend. The joy of deliverance, to be complete, must be associated with the love of a personal friend. And in the goodness and wisdom of God in saving us from our wretchedness He has given us the love and joy of a heavenly Friend. It is quite possible for one to be a real friend, and yet the announcement of His coming to be other than good tidings of great joy; although friendly, He may be stern and morose. But Christ is a Friend in whose

presence is fulness of joy, although our Lord was a Man of Sorrows.

III. Christ's birth should be to us "good tidings of great joy," because He has come to secure us a home above. He abides with us always; His presence and joy remain with us to the end of life. And even then He does not leave us, for His guiding, supporting, and joy-giving presence accompanies us when we enter upon that dark valley which separates the tabernacle on earth from that everlasting home in heaven.

Pulpit Analyst, vol. iv., p. 678.

Christmas Day Lessons.

I. Christmas Day brings before us the relation of Christianity to the religion which went before; for the birth at Bethlehem was itself a link with the past. The coming of Jesus Christ was not unheralded or unforeseen; other nations had prided themselves on their illustrious origin in times long past, delighted to think that their first fathers had sprung from a god, a demi-god, or a hero; the Jewish nation alone had hardly anything of this feeling. Its best and wisest spirits turn steadily towards the future—the King, the Deliverer, the Glory of the golden times of their people was far in advance; and as years rolled on this belief grew deeper and stronger. It was the hope of the whole nation, it became like a natural instinct within them; like an instinct of duty, of immortality of self-preservation. Jesus of Nazareth, the Child born this day in the city of David, was at once the satisfaction and realisation of these ancient forebodings.

II. The recollections of this day also combine it with the future. If so much of what went before led up to it, so all that is most important in what followed leads us back to it. If we trace the laws, the morals, the literature, the art, of the modern world back to their source, we shall find that for the largest part of their peculiarities there is no event adequate to produce the immense transformation until we reach the same point as that in which the ancient prophecies ended.

III. This decisive world-historical birthday took place in a small inn of a small village of a small province of a small nation. It was the greatest of events on the smallest of scales. There are some who think that all events and characters are to be measured by the magnitude of the stage on which they appear; there are some who are perplexed by the thought that this globe, on which the history of man is enacted, is now known to be a mere speck in the universe. But the moment we go below

the surface we find that the truth conveyed to us by the birth of the world's Redeemer in the little village of Bethlehem is the likeness of a principle which ramifies far and wide. The great nations of the world have almost always been amongst the smallest in size. "Many are called, but few are chosen."

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 417.

Chap. ii., vers. 10, 14.

WE have on the Feast of the Nativity these two lessons: instead of anxiety within, and despondence without—instead of a weary search after great things—to be cheerful and joyful; and again, to be so in the midst of those obscure and ordinary circumstances of life which the world passes over and thinks scorn of.

I. Why should the heavenly hosts appear to the shepherds? What was in them which attracted the attention of the angels, and the Lord of angels? Were these shepherds learned, distinguished, or powerful? Were they especially known for piety and gifts? Nothing is said to make us think so. Why then were they chosen?—for their poverty's sake and obscurity. Almighty God looks with a sort of especial love upon the lowly. Perhaps it is that man—a fallen, dependent, and destitute creature—is more in his proper place when he is in lowly circumstances; and that power and riches, though unavoidable in the case of some, are unnatural appendages to man as such. The angel appeared to the shepherds as if to show that God had chosen the poor in this world to be the heirs of His kingdom, and so to do honour to their lot.

II. The angel honoured a humble lot by his very appearing to the shepherds; next he taught it to be joyful by his message. He disclosed good tidings so much above this world as to equalise high and low, rich and poor, one with another. Surely the lesson of joy which the Incarnation gives us is as impressive as the lesson of humility. Let us seek the grace of a cheerful heart, an even temper, sweetness, gentleness, and brightness of mind, as walking in His light, and by His grace. Let us pray Him to give us the spirit of ever-abundant, ever-springing love which overpowers and sweeps away the vexations of life by its own richness and strength, and which above all things unites us to Him who is the Fountain and Centre of all mercy, lovingkindness, and joy.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 244.

We learn from the text—

I. That the Gospel is not originated by man, but is brought to him.

II. That in revealing the Gospel the ministry of angels is only temporary.

III. That the Gospel is inseparably identified with the highest joy.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 307.

RELIGIOUS JOY.

We have on the Feast of the Nativity these two lessons: instead of anxiety within and despondence without—instead of a weary search after great things, to be cheerful and joyful; and again, to be so in the midst of those obscure and ordinary circumstances of life which this world passes over and thinks scorn of.

I. First, what do we read just before the text?—that there were certain shepherds keeping watch over their flocks by night, and angels appeared to them. Why should the heavenly hosts appear to these shepherds? Were they learned, distinguished, or powerful? Nothing is said to make us think so. They were chosen for their poverty's sake, and obscurity. Almighty God looks with a sort of especial love upon the lowly.

II. The angel honoured a humble lot by his very appearing to the shepherds; next he taught it to be joyful by his message.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. v., p. 326.

I. THERE is no news equal to the news of Christmas. To those who receive it, who feed on it in their hearts, it is like news of a great victory. It tells of an enemy defeated—and a cruel, malicious enemy, an enemy who is alike the foe of God and man, and that is the devil. Satan's power was shaken to its centre on the day that the angels sang their hymn of joy in the fields about Bethlehem. To-day, instead of the "gods many and lords many," we are presented with a truer and nobler Object of our homage. We have shown to us One who is the brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His Person.

II. What is it that distinguishes the glad tidings of Christmas from the tidings of Easter, or of Ascension, or of Whit-Sunday? It is this, that the Son of God has come into the world, and come as a Son of Man, and come not for a day, or for a year,

but to be ever with us unto the end of time: Emmanuel, God with us. Christmas speaks to us of One who is Partner with us in all our sorrows, all our joy, all the changes and chances of our mortal life. Are there any here who mourn? Christ mourns with them. Is anyone here perplexed and troubled, from whatever cause? There is One come who is able to unravel for us our difficulties, and to make our way plain before our face. Let us seek the Lord, and pray Him to come into our hearts, and fill us with peace and joy, and gentleness, and goodness, and to make our hearts a copy of His own.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 98.

REFERENCES: ii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,330; vol. xii., No. 727; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 435; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 49. ii. 10, 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1,026; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 104. ii. 10-14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 321. ii. 11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 556; vol. vii., p. 341.

Chap. ii., ver. 12.—"And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

THE Sign of the Babe reveals Four Things.

I. That our Saviour was a real man. "Ye shall find the Babe." In the flesh—our flesh—Christ came; as truly man as He was truly God; and infinite though the mystery may be, that is the truth gathering about the Babe wrapt in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger.

II. That our Saviour was *simply* a man. "Ye shall find the Babe" just a babe—no more. He was almost an outcast babe—no interest evidently gathered about Him when He came. We can say very little more about Him than this: He was a babe. We cannot put any of the ordinary adjectives and say He was a royal babe, or a wealthy babe, or a promising babe, or a learned man's babe: He was just a babe.

III. The sign shows us our Saviour as a loving man. Christ came to begin the reign of love; to make love for ever the one force that should rule man's spirit, man's intercourse, man's relationship. Therefore, He came as a babe to win first a mother's heart, and through that mother's heart to win his way into the very heart of mankind.

IV. The sign shows us our Saviour, for the most part, a rejected man—"wrapt in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' It was the custom in the East to dress very young children

merely in folds of linen and woollen. But the giving of this description by the angel, "swaddling clothes," seems to intimate some peculiar unreadiness for Christ. He came unexpectedly, and the best that could be done had to be arranged for Him in the circumstances. The world was not even ready for Him as a babe.

R. TUCK, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 404.

I. THE text teaches us how everywhere and in all things the Divine veils and even hides Itself in the outward. This shall be your sign—not the march of a conqueror, not the splendour of a king, but the babe wrapt in its swaddling bands; and the babe lying in a manger. Wherever God is the presence is secret. What, for example, is the Book of God—the Bible—but an example of this sanctity in commonness; a heap of leaves, marked with ink and hand, stamped with signs for sounds, multiplied by printing-press and steam engine, conveyed hither and thither by railways, bought and sold in shops; tossed from hand to hand in schools and homes, lost and dissipated by vulgar wear and tear. Yet in this Book of books—thus material, thus earthly, thus human in its circumstances—there lie concealed the very breath and spirit of God Himself mighty to stir hearts, and mighty to regenerate souls. The swathing bands of sense and time enclose the living and moving power which is of eternity, which is Divine—nay, the sign of the true Deity is the fact that the form is human.

II. The same thing which is true of the Bible is true also of the Church and of the Christian. Where is it, we ask, that God in Christ dwells most certainly, most personally, on this earth? It is no word of man's invention which answers to the Church: "Ye collectively are the temple of God;" and to the Christian: "Your body is the shrine of the Holy Ghost which is in you." The treasure of Divine light is always held in earthen vessels: not until the pitcher is broken at the fountain shall the full radiance shine out so as to be read of all men. Meanwhile, the sign of God is the commonness. Christ came not to take men out of the world, but to consecrate and keep them in it.

III. And was it not exactly thus with our Lord Jesus Christ Himself—not only in the circumstances of His birth, but throughout His human life and His earthly ministry? Even when the preparation was ended, and the life beyond all other lives was begun, still was it not true that the Godhead veiled itself in the humanity? The sign of the birth was the sign also of the life.

Christ the Lord is here, and therefore the human—the very human—is the token.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 999.

THIS verse presents to us, in the most striking manner, that our Lord, however mysteriously His human nature was pervaded and exalted by a Divine nature, was, notwithstanding such ineffable and inexplicable complication, one of ourselves: that He passed through the ordinary gradations of humanity, increasing in wisdom, increasing in stature, keeping pace with both these developments by a corresponding progress in the love and admiration of those about Him, and in the favour and approval of His Heavenly Father.

I. In the grief of Mary for the temporary loss of her Child we may trace a suggestion for those who find themselves to be undergoing in their own inward experience a similar separation. Would it not be well that those who experience this loss—this privation of the Divine Comforter—should go straight back, like Mary, from the point at which they are to the point where they last enjoyed it, and retrace the steps that led them away from it, and return to the house of God, the presence of God, the ordinances of God, if haply they may recover what they have lost? And let them be encouraged to do this by the fact that the parents not only sought but found Christ at Jerusalem.

II. There were, in connection with the Temple, apartments where the Jewish rabbis were accustomed to give lectures on the Mosaic law, to which the Jewish youths who contemplated devoting themselves to the office of teacher were permitted to resort, and to elicit the information they required by putting questions, which were answered by the rabbis. In one of these halls or porches dedicated to religious learning He was discovered by His parents. He was engaged in asking questions, and in listening to the answers. If there should seem to be something almost like peremptoriness, abruptness, independence, in the Divine Child's reply to His mother, that incongruous and jarring sort of feeling will be dissipated by adverting to the perfectly filial submission to parental authority recorded in verse 51: "And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." Christ came to brighten the homes of poverty, and to make nobility consist in something else than birth—to set up a new patent of nobility. Let the humble craftsman look at Him as a holy Brother.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 227.

Chap. ii., vers. 13, 14.—"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

THE Angels' Hymn.

I. "Glory to God in the highest." This is the first jubilant adoring exclamation of the angels, as they beheld the fulfilment of that eternal counsel of God, which, partially known no doubt long since and foreseen in heaven, was now at length actually accomplished upon earth; as they beheld the Lord of glory, Him whom they had worshipped in heaven, become an infant of days, and as such laid in that rugged cradle at Bethlehem. But what is the exact force of these words? Can God receive increase of glory, more than He has already? Is it not the very idea of God that He is infinitely glorious, and that this He always has been, and ever will be? Assuredly so; in Himself He is as incapable of increase as of diminution of glory. But *we* may *ascribe* more glory to Him; more, that is, of the honour due unto His Name; as we know Him more, as the infinite perfection of His being, His power, His wisdom, His love, are gradually revealed to us. So, too, may angels, and the heavenly host declare in this voice of theirs that the Incarnation of the Son of God was a new revelation, a new outcoming to them of the unsearchable riches of the wisdom, the power, the love, that are in God.

II. "On earth peace, good will toward men." That same wondrous act which brought such glory to God, namely, the taking of our flesh by the Son of God, brought also peace on earth, and declared God's good will towards men. (1) Christ made peace for man with his God. Man was alienated and estranged from God by wicked works; he knew that he hated God, and he feared that God hated him. But now the child was born who should kill the enmity in the heart of man, who should make a propitiation to enable the love of God to flow freely forth on the sinner as it could not flow before. (2) In setting men at peace with God, Christ sets them at peace with themselves. (3) But man, at enmity with God and with himself, is also at enmity with his brother; selfishness is the root of all the divisions upon earth, from the trivial brawl that disturbs the peace of a village to the mighty war which makes a desolation over half the world. But He who was as upon this day born came to uproot this selfishness in the heart of man, to plant love there in its room: and distant as that day may be, it will yet arrive, when the nations shall not learn

war any more. It was, then, with threefold right that the angels hailed His advent as the advent of "peace on earth, good will toward men."

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 68.

REFERENCES: ii. 13, 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 44; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 12; *Homilist*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 50.

Chap. ii., ver. 14.

THE Angels' Christmas Hymn.

I. "Glory," so the angels began, "to God in the highest!" Why was the birth of Christ glory to God in the highest? Besides other deep mysteries, which there may be in that saying, God did thus begin to make known to the holy angels, to those who serve Him in the highest, His manifold wisdom in respect of the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is evermore His special glory among them, as any condescending act of a great and beloved king is his glory among his subjects: namely, that He is now Man as well as God; He hath lowered, abased, emptied Himself, so unspeakably as to have taken our nature into His own, and in it to have suffered for us the worst of pain and shame—love taking on itself what sin deserved.

II. The birth of Christ is also peace on earth, peace between God and man, the blessed way to His favour which is better than life. Many of us may know something of the heartfelt, extreme, unutterable delight, when parents or brethren, or dear friends whom we depend upon, are reconciled to us after any kind of falling out; how the whole soul, before unquiet and restless, is restored to sweet assurance of safety and repose! Now people say to themselves over and over, "Come what will, now we have that which we most craved for; we have the heart which we thought we had lost; we know now that we are still dear to him whom we feared we had affronted for ever." Like to this, only unspeakably more than this, is the sense of being reconciled to God, the knowledge of how grievously soever we have fallen from Him, He still cares for us as our Father; and this blessing is solemnly renewed to us as often as Christmas comes round, in the very words of the angel: "On earth peace."

III. And it is, also, good will towards men; not peace only, but grace; not forgiveness only, but every blessing flows from it. There is nothing too good or too great to be expected,

hoped, and prayed for, by those whom the Eternal Son owns for brethren and the Eternal Father for children, and into whom the Eternal Spirit has entered, to join them as true members to the Son.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 278.

THE tidings of the coming of Christ, which were communicated to the shepherds by the angel appointed of God, are no longer confined to the spot and to the period which were rendered memorable by their disclosure. They have ceased to be tidings. They are no longer new. Now they have a history. Time itself has been God's commentator. The ages have rolled away, nations and kingdoms have changed, but this truth of the coming of Christ has not been rolled away, and it has changed only to grow.

I. If theology could exclude the truth that Christ is God, it would remain as poetry. The world would not let it fall. Humanity would enshrine it; we would dream it; we would wake to believe; we would follow it wherever it should lead us.

II. The true work of Christ was to reveal to men their sins, to humble them, to empty them before God, to bring them under the complete control of the Divine will; and this became a sieve, as it were, which separated men one from another. It was the spiritual power of Christ's purity that arrayed the Scribes and Pharisees against Him, and led to His arrest and crucifixion. It was the contrast between His life and theirs, the influence of His doctrines upon their self-conceit, and the power of His soul upon their nature and conduct, that aroused their opposition to Him.

III. For eighteen hundred years Christ has been ostensibly received and rejoiced in as a spiritual power; and yet during this whole period, those who have really received Him according to His errand of the soul, in a way that humbled them, cast them down into condemnation, judged them and raised them up into life, have been relatively the few, the despised and the outcast. Christ has been accepted almost universally throughout the world as an external power; but Christ as a purifier, Christ as a Saviour from sin, taking sides with the weak, the oppressed, the wronged, has been almost universally rejected throughout the world. How many myriads of men are there, who on Christmas Day, wear flowers in memory of Christ, chant hymns in honour of Christ, and present gifts in celebration of the birth of Christ, who will not let the Master enter one

step unto their hearts to purify them! Let us beware lest we fall into this error, which so widely prevails in these latter days, of receiving Christ outwardly and rejecting Him inwardly.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 45.

REFERENCES: ii. 14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 168; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iv., p. 343; A.W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 80; W. Dorling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 27; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 401; E. J. Willis, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 120; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 91; *New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 234; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 195. ii. 15.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 108; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 45; *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 337; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 72; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 45; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., pp. 557, 558; vol. xv., p. 360; *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 65; H. G. Robinson, *Man in the Image of God*, p. 155. ii. 15-21.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 10.

Chap. ii., ver. 16.—"And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger."

THE Hidden God.

I. It is said in the Bible that God is a God that hideth Himself; and yet there is nothing of which we are more sure than this—that if any man will heartily, and by all appointed means, seek and feel after the Lord, he will not fail to find Him; for not only doth He promise that he that seeks shall find Him, but He even saith, "I am found of them that sought Me not:"—whence we may learn, that God hides Himself from some, and makes himself known to others, as in His unsearchable wisdom and justice He thinks good. And this appears plainly in the history of our Lord and Saviour, God manifest in the flesh. God's own Son, being the true and Eternal God, had taken upon Him our flesh, and had been born into the world. This most wondrous fact had actually taken place. And yet of the many thousands, and hundreds of thousands, of the men that He had made, who were then dwelling on the face of His earth, who knew it? Were they among the great or learned among the scribes or chief priests, or interpreters of the Law? No; it pleased God to pass by these, and to make known His blessed Son to poor, unlettered shepherds. And herein our tender and merciful Father is giving great comfort for poor people who are obliged to work hard for their bread, late at night and early in the morning. Let them only do their duty as in His sight, and strive, amid their earthly employments, to raise their thoughts to their Maker, and He will be mindful of

them, and visit them, and make known unto them, in the depths of their hearts, the secrets of His love.

II. The first step towards heavenly wisdom in all men, learned or unlearned, is a deep and true lowliness of heart. They that have this are always willing to receive instruction, especially from those who are duly appointed to instruct them. And it is to such simple souls that God has always been pleased to make known Himself and His holy will. The shepherds, doubtless, like the other Jews, expected that the Christ, or anointed Saviour, whom their prophets foretold, would come as a great King and Conqueror. It must have been, therefore, a trial to their faith, to find Him in the lowest poverty, laid in the manger in the inn stable. But yet, like St. Paul, they were not disobedient to the heavenly vision, and they found Him, whom truly to know is eternal life.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii. p. 302.

THE Holy Family.

I. This was the first Christmas family that was ever gathered together in this world—the first, the most notable, and the holiest. The exceeding beauty of the group, its surpassing interest and attractiveness, its close affinity with our innermost instincts and profoundest sympathies,—have been attested by the multiplied forms into which the hand of art has shaped it, under the familiar title of the Holy Family—than which, perhaps, no subject in the world has been more frequently depicted.

II. It is not too much to apply the term "domestic religion" to the sentiments which periodically crave the blameless indulgence of Christmas gatherings, and to the affections which are stimulated, sustained, and kept in exercise by these annual observances. Are not those feelings and affections a part of religion. Have not Christ's Apostles classed domestic virtues and affections among the graces and fruits springing out of inward and spiritual life? Even in the old and more austere Testament we find "Brethren," *i.e.* members of one family, "dwelling together in unity," compared with the genial exhalation of the dews of Hermon to refresh and fertilise the sister slopes of Zion.

III. There is such a thing not only as innocent enjoyment, but innocent mirth too; and though actual religious exercise or contemplation be suspended, the spirit of Christ's characteristically humane social teaching may be present. The blazing Christmas log shedding its happy gleam on happy faces gathered round will serve to kindle or rekindle warm affections which

may, if it please God, retain their warmth all the more genially in consequence through the coming year.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 130.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 87. ii. 17-20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 660. ii. 18.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 26. ii. 18, 19.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 258. ii. 19.—*Ibid.*, p. 118; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 27; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 369.

Chap. ii., ver. 20.—"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."

THINK what a changed world it has become because Jesus was born at Bethlehem.

I. Remember that the Christian change of the world's history is a fact. The influx through Christ of a new power into the life of humanity is a known fact of experience, as certain as the battle of Gettysburg, or the dawn of day.

II. In Christianity we breathe a different air. Humanity has crossed a boundary line. Up to Bethlehem, bleak and cold—down from Bethlehem, another and a happier time.

III. Jesus has been to the world (1) a new revelation of God, (2) a new revelation of man.

N. SMYTH, *Contemporary Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 362.

REFERENCES: ii. 21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 24; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 12; vol. iv., p. 88; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 48. ii. 21-35.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 10.

Chap. ii., ver 22.—"And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord."

I. THE entrance of our Lord into His Temple had been foretold by Malachi four hundred years before (Mal. iii. 1). But the Lord did not now come in His glory, like as before when that bright cloud, the sign of His presence, filled the new-built Temple in the time of King Solomon: He came now in our flesh, in the form of a helpless babe. For though it was still in deed and in truth the Lord of Hosts coming into His Temple, yet now to the fleshly eyes what was to be seen? No visible glory, but two persons in mean condition and of poor estate, bringing what was supposed to be their first-born infant to present Him according to the law.

II. Christ was presented as One willing to offer Himself up for us; He came even as it had been foretold of Him, saying, "Lo,

I come to do Thy will, O God." He was come into the world to do away with the sacrifices of the law, by offering up Himself as the true and perfect sacrifice once for all on the Cross. And His presentation in the Temple was (as it were) a foreshowing, or rather a beginning, of that sacrifice which He accomplished on the Cross as on an altar where He presented Himself before His Father as bearing our sins and making a full satisfaction for them.

III. We were presented to God once, and that pure and clean, after our baptism. And now when we have sinned, as we all see, we are permitted to present ourselves with confession and prayers, either at home or here in His own sacred house; like the holy Simeon and Anna we come here to present ourselves before the Lord with confession, prayers, and praise; thus, if we persevere in constant devout waiting upon God, we may trust we shall, like them, find Christ here and obtain of Him the gifts of holiness, and in union with Him be presented acceptable and pure before God. For when we come hither to pray for the pardon of our sins, and the cleansing of our whole man from our wretched defilements, we do in a manner, by our very appearance, if we bring our hearts with us, present and plead before the Father the merits of Christ's sacrifice. Let it therefore be our endeavour to present ourselves at His Holy Table each time more and more, as we would present ourselves before His presence on His throne of judgment at the last day.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 21; see also J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 146.

REFERENCES: ii. 22.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 57. ii. 22-40.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 26; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. i., p. 264.

Chap. ii., ver. 25.—**"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."**

SOME Aspects of the Presentation in the Temple.

I. Two points strike us in Simeon pre-eminently, whether they are marks of a school of Jewish interpretation, or rather traits of a single soul, simpler and more receptive than most. One is—that starting merely with prophecy, and not concerned to image to himself the details of its fulfilment, he hears in it a note which hardly sounded as clearly even to Apostles: "A light for the revelation of the Gentiles." The other is—that the sadder and more mysterious tones of prophecy come back to

him as well as the more triumphant ones—the stone of stumbling—the gainsaying people—the sword that is to awake against the Shepherd. There is set in the forefront of the new revelation, side by side with triumphant hopes and promises, the record of a prevision of limitation, drawbacks, it would seem, even of partial failure. These are accepted from the first as necessary conditions; accepted and proclaimed by the same prophetic voice, which speaks most strongly of its satisfying, universal, eternal blessedness.

II. The words of Simeon touch three points, which correspond roughly with the three mysteries of human life. (1) He sees that the Gospel is to bring pain as well as happiness: "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." The nearer to Christ the surer and deeper the pain. He sees that it is to be the occasion of evil as well as of good—to lower as well as to lift—to be the stone of stumbling as well as a ladder on which men may rise to heavenly places. He sees that though it brings light, it is light which cannot be visible to all eyes. (2) The second note is one still harsher to our ears. Pain is a condition of which, if we cannot see the full explanation of its necessity, we can see a certain purpose—we understand its disciplinary power, and we see its limit. But evil touches the soul; reaches into the infinite world to where the sense of limit is lost. What a strange forecast to the everlasting Gospel, that it should be for the fall, the moral fall, as well as the rising of men! And so it has been in the chequered after-history. If goodness has taken subtler and deeper forms, so has badness. Men's hearts have been widened to embrace all humankind, and they have been narrowed and hardened into persecutors. (3) In the sphere of *reason* there is also a note of incompleteness: "A sign spoken against." These words may stand as a figure of the clamour of voices outside the Church, questioning and denying; and of the whispers of timorous and distracted souls within, misdoubting their own hopes. It is no answer to say that they are due to the perversity and weakness of men. We do not even mean by that that they are unforeseen accidents which have befallen the revelation. They were made account for in its ordering. These limitations, whatever they are, were *foreseen*; they are a part of the Divine plan—foreseen before the angels sang "Peace on earth," or prophets' voices welcomed the coming light and glory.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Feb. 7th, 1884.

WHAT is it that is here described by the words, "the consolation of Israel?"

I. Israel was God's own people, constituted in their first father Abraham, blessed with various renewals of the promise, and the covenant. From that time onwards, they had long formed the one bright spot in the midst of the darkness of the nations. God was with them. He was their God, so that, as compared with the nations round, Israel's consolation was already abundant. Still, Israel had, and looked for, a consolation to come. God's people differed in this also from every people on earth. The brightness and the glory of every Gentile race was past; but Israel's glory was ever in the future. They looked for a deliverer; for one of whom their first covenant promises spoke; of whom their psalms and prophets were full, to whom every sacrifice and ordinance pointed. When, then, we use the words, "the consolation of Israel," we mean Christ, in the fulness of His constituted Person and Office as the Comforter of His people. And when we say "waiting for the consolation of Israel," we imply that aptitude of expectation, anxious looking for, hearty desire of, this consolation, which comes from, and is in fact, Christ Himself.

II. Christ is the consolation of His people (1) inasmuch as He delivers them from the bondage of sin. In the history of that nation which was a parable for the Church of God, this mighty deliverance was prefigured by their bringing up out of the land of Egypt, the house of bondage. And correspondent, but far more glorious, is the deliverance which Christ accomplishes for those who wait for and receive His consolation, even till we depart in peace, having seen His salvation, and the consolation which we have waited for is poured in all its fulness around us. (2) Christ consoles His people not only from guilt but in sorrow. It is His especial office to bind up the broken heart, to give the oil of joy for sorrow, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. This He does directly and indirectly. Directly, inasmuch as His Spirit is ever testifying within the sorrowing soul of the believer in Him,—cheering him with better hopes and more enduring joys. Indirectly, inasmuch as His holy example is ever before us; His compassionate tone; His promises of help and comfort; His invitations to all that are weary and heavy-laden.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 271.

REFERENCES: ii. 25.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 659; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 127; *Homilist*, vol. ii., p. 572. ii. 25-35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 77.

Chap. ii., ver. 26.—"**And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.**"

I. This revelation was made to an old man who had waited on God continually in the Temple service, cherishing in his secret heart the promise given to the first fathers of his race, renewed from time to time by the mouth of God's holy prophets, and at length by one of them defined as to the time of its fulfilment, and brought within the limits of a certain expectation and hope. Simeon's prayers and meditations, his converse with men like-minded, his observations of passing events, possibly his knowledge of the words of certain wise men who had lately arrived at Jerusalem enquiring for a King that was to be born, had at length convinced him that the time was at hand; and it pleased God to confirm his hope by an inward revelation of the Spirit. "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, till he had seen the Lord's Christ.

II. Who ever saw a Christian man or woman die in faith, but heard them almost say old Simeon's words, "Mine eyes have seen Thy salvation?" And whence comes this strength of salvation to the eyes of dying men? Whence comes it but through that Child whom Simeon held in his arms as he prophesied the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and the piercing of the soul of the Virgin Mother with the sword of grief. No life but that which Jesus Christ endured on earth, no death but that which He died on Mount Calvary, could ever establish the truth of the Gospel to the poor. All the wisdom and learning that could have been brought to bear, all the worldly power, even power to command stones to become bread—all this would have been in vain. No sign could have convinced a poor man so effectually of God's sympathy with him in his low estate as the birth of his Saviour of a poor Jewish maiden, and the manifestation of the Gospel in a person so humble. And to those who view human life in all its bearings it is obvious at once that no system of religion could be true which does not imply this at its basis, that the poor, the vast multitude of men, are the chief consideration. Educate as you will; legislate as you will; double by chemical science and skilfulness of labour the productiveness of the earth; bind yourself together in associations to provide against all contingencies of evil; there will still be the poor. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only Gospel that reaches the needs of the poor. When Jesus Christ humbled Himself, and took on Him the form of a servant, when He dwelt at Nazareth with His parents, and was

subject unto them in a low estate, He ennobled the state of poverty for ever.

BISHOP CLAUGHTON, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No 620.

REFERENCES: ii. 26.—*Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 43. ii. 28-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,417.

OLD Age. Chap. ii., ver. 29.

The examples of Simeon and Anna combine to set before us a picture of that old age which we must allow to be the most befitting, which we must wish to see realised in our own case—an old age free from wordly harass and desires—with leisure for higher things; occupied with the care of the soul; calmly waiting for the great change; employed much in religious meditation and prayer; anxious for nothing which the world can give; anxious only to be found of the Lord; ready and prepared when He arrives; walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

I. Such an old age is not, we fear, very commonly seen. For the most part, as men grow in years, they grow more worldly; and instead of putting off the cares, and pleasures, and occupations of youth and middle life, they cleave to these with an unwise tenacity. We seldom see any who, like Barzillai, or Simeon, or Anna, have detached themselves from all unnecessary business, in order to walk the closer with God; who have set their affections not upon things on the earth, but upon things above.

II. St. Paul tells us, in a few words, the qualities which ought to adorn old age—sobriety, gravity, temperance, wisdom. The old should be known among us for these things. They should be examples and guides to youth in the ways and works of godliness. To them we should look for counsel, for advice, for help, in the practice of a Christian life. Above all, they should be examples of piety, of reverent respect for all God's holy ordinances. It is recorded of Simeon and of Anna, that in their old age they were diligent in their attendance upon God's worship. The place where they were to be found was the Temple. The service which most occupied them was the service of God. And so, surely, ought it to be with the old amongst ourselves. No place so well befits them as the sanctuary. If any, they most of all should be able to say, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth."

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 107.

Chap. ii., vers. 29, 30.—"Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

THE Glory and Work of Old Age.

What were the gains which blessed this old man's age?

I. The first was prophetic power; not so much the power of foretelling, as the power of insight into God's doings. He saw the Child, and he knew that It was the Saviour of the world: "Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation." And in a moment, before his inward eye, he beheld the Sun of Redemption rising in glory, not only over his own people, but in a light which should lighten the Gentiles also. This is the glory of a Christian's old age—vividness of spiritual vision. The spirit does its own peculiar work better than in youth and manhood. It sees more clearly into the life and realities of things. It has gained security of faith and hope for itself, and in all matters pertaining to the spiritual progress of mankind it sees into God's plans, and rejoices in them.

II. Another remarkable gain blessed the old age of Simeon, the possession of a liberal religious view. We find the old man set free from the exclusiveness and bigotry of his time and of his youth. Those were strange words upon the lips of a Jew, "A light to lighten the Gentiles." Those who heard Simeon would be likely to call him a dangerous Liberal. The true liberality of old age is not indifference. It is gained by the entrance of the soul into the large region of the love of God, by deeper communion with the infinite variety of the character of Christ.

III. The crowning blessing of old age is deep peace. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word." We can contend no more; we have scarcely anything left to contend against; we have slain all our foes in the power of Christ; we have exhausted all our doubts; and as the clouds disperse, the star of hope rises soft and clear in the pale pure light of the heavenly dawn. We look on it, and are at rest; we lay down our armour; we lie back contented in the arms of God.

IV. The special work of age is partly outward, partly inward. Its outward work is the spreading of charity. Its inward work consists (1) in the edifying of the heart in noble religion in consideration of the past; (2) in rounding the soul into as great perfection as possible.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 393.

CHRIST and Old Age.

Scripture tells us of a "good old age," and we would ask to-day what that is. For assuredly all old age is not good. If there is an old age which makes, there is an old age that mars reputations. There are those who, for their fame, have lived too long: have survived their usefulness and their honour, and whose obituary, when at length we read it, awakens little interest and no sorrow.

I. Few men, in the abstract, desire old age; few men, in their own experience, find it desirable. Like all things of importance—like success, like honour, like love, like sorrow, pain, and death itself—it needs practising for. A good old age comes to no man by accident. A well-principled and self-controlled patience, under its special trials and disabilities, is one condition of a good old age.

II. There is another of a less negative kind and of equal importance. There is a natural tendency as life advances to an impatience of the new. One of the foremost conditions of a good old age is the preservation, the perpetual renewing, of a thorough harmony and unity with the young. An old man may be young in feeling, and, when he is so, there is no attraction like his for the young. Secure of his sympathy, they can use his experience; there is a repose which even the young can delight in, in that mellowness of character which is at once love and wisdom.

III. Nor can we forget this one further characteristic of the good old age. If there are trials which must be borne with patience—if there are special risks which must be jealously counteracted—in the circumstances of an old man, there are also incomparable privileges which must be treasured up and occupied. A long life, lived with eye and ear and heart open, lays up a store of memories which no chronicles can rival, and no libraries supersede. The influences of old age are incalculable. Let a man give himself to the work, and he may mould the young almost to his will. Such a work requires, for its accomplishment, an Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ to the old.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words of Hope*, p. 88.

REFERENCES: ii. 29, 30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 1,014; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 39. ii. 29-32.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 272; B. Warfield, *Expositor*, 3rd series; vol. ii., pp. 301, 321.

Chap. ii., ver. 32.—"**A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.**"

THE song of Simeon was very beautiful in its arrangement. First the believer's personal appropriation of a promise, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation;" next the expansion of a Christian's Catholic spirit, "A Light to lighten the Gentiles," and then the holy patriotism of a Jewish heart, "and the glory of Thy people Israel."

I. The question will naturally arise, What is the distinction, if any, between Christ as the "Light of the Gentiles" and Christ as the "Glory of Israel?" Is it only a difference of degree? Sight, growing into deeper intensity and glow, becomes glory. So Christ illuminates, indeed, all people, but not with that lustre with which He will one day encircle Jerusalem. And it is therefore "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

II. Or, once more—the actual presence of the Lord, in beauty and power, is glory. Where shall that Presence be at the last? At Jerusalem. Very great will be the irradiation of the whole earth. But still it will be only the distant beam of a full meridian sun, which is blazing in Palestine "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel."

III. As Gentiles then, we ask, What is our proper privilege and portion? And we have the answer—Light. Christ a light; of these simple words no one will know the power who has never felt the narrowing in of a moral darkness on his mind. But ask the man who has ever known a season of deep sorrow which shrouded all his earthly prospects, and left nothing before him but a thick night over the future and one rayless expanse. Or, still more, hear the soul, which, under the conscious hiding of God's countenance, has felt the shadows of conscience deepen over his spirit into the blackness of despair. And those are the men who will understand the words, "Christ a Light."

IV. Turn next to Israel's glory. When Abraham's outcasts and Judah's dispersed ones shall all come back—come back first in their unconverted state, by a political restoration, to their own country; then to trials and afflictions commensurate with the deed which their fathers perpetrated; then to majesty unprecedented upon this earth—when, the subjects of the visible King of kings and Lord of lords, they shall hold high court and be supreme among the nations of the world, that Infant Jesus, in Simeon's arms, shall be "the glory of His people

Israel," when He "reigns in Mount Zion, and before His ancients gloriously."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1871, p. 217.

REFERENCES: ii. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 826. ii. 33. —*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 341.

Chap. ii., ver. 34.—"Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

THE Dual Aspect of Christ's Advent.

The words of Simeon in the text seem to be intended to check natural but undue expectations about the effect of the first coming of Christ. The Child of Mary, the everlasting Son of the Father, is set by the counsels of God, set in Jewish history, in human history, for the fall and rising again of many a human soul.

I. Let us here remark, that Christ's coming into the world was not to have a uniform effect upon human souls. It would act on one soul in one way, and on another in another, it would act differently on the same soul at different periods of its history. God's good will is limited by the free action of men. Men can, if they like, reject Him, and in fact they do. He is the glory of His people at large, but of the individuals who compose it many will lose, as many will gain, by His coming among them. That is the sense of Simeon's words, "Behold this Child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel."

II. Of the two effects of Christ's Advent Simeon mentions, as first in order, the fall of many in Israel. It must strike us as bold to the very verge of paradox thus to associate His blessed Name, who came to be the health and Saviour of men, with spiritual failure. And yet this language was in keeping with what the prophecy must have led men to expect. Isaiah had said that the Lord Himself would be a "stumbling-stone and a rock of offence" to both the houses of Israel; and this was shown to be the case again and again through the centuries of Israel's history. The worst faults of this people were occasioned by the misuse of privileges and opportunities designed to lead up to God.

III. Christ is also set for the rising of many in Israel. This was His original purpose in coming among us; a purpose which was only limited in its operation by the free but perverted will of man. When our Lord had His own way with souls, it was to raise them to newness of life. He did not

simply promote this resurrection in men. He was Himself, so He said, the "Resurrection." To come into contact with Him was to touch a life so intrinsically buoyant and vigorous that it transfused itself forthwith into the attracted soul, and bore it onwards and upwards.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 401.

Chap. ii., vers. 34, 35 (with John ii., 25).—"Behold this Child is set . . . that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."—"He knew what was in man."

I. THAT is the claim which Christ has upon us; that He *knows* us. As it is said, "He knew what was in man," and He does not merely know our faces, our forms, but our true selves. You know nothing of any science or thing until you know its hidden inner secret. Man has a great hidden nature, waiting for revealment and development. Christ is the true Revealer of the hidden nature of man. He walked amidst the mysteries of man's spirit, as one there perfectly at home.

II. Knowledge of human nature is essential to all teaching. Have you not noticed that scarcely any mind can cross the broad disc of our Lord's even temporary association, without revealing, as it passes, its state. It seems as if any mind coming into the neighbourhood of His Divine character is compelled to yield itself up. Not only to His perfect knowledge, in the memorable events of His life, is illustrated how that which is done in secret is proclaimed on the house-tops. The teaching of our Lord had the same influence as His personal character; it revealed the thoughts of the heart. (1) His knowledge was and is absolute. (2) Hence His authority over man. Whenever a man makes you feel his power it is because he knows you, because he reads you. (3) He revealed our thoughts in His sympathy.

III. Christ not only revealed the thoughts of many hearts by eliciting their peculiar moral character; but He spoke to the universal heart of men in all ages, both by His deeds and by His words. He transformed the great instincts of men in all ages into absolute revelations.

IV. You will see how eminently our Saviour knew us, if you think of the four things which it was necessary should be done for us, and which He, as our Saviour, wrought out, to make His righteousness ours. (1) He saw that human nature was dark, He came to enlighten it. (2) He saw the hardness as well as the darkness of man. He came to soften the world's

heart. (3) He consecrated humanity. He revealed the holy destiny of man, for He knew what was in man. He knew that darkness and hardness were the indissoluble associates of impurity, therefore He came to consecrate human nature. (4) He came to sublime and to crown human nature, to reveal to man His brightest, boldest thought—eternal life—immortality.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 116.

REFERENCES: ii. 34.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 907; J. C. Hare, *Sermons in Herstmonceux Church*, p. 129; *Three Hundred Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 44; *Good Words*, vol. vi., p. 242. ii. 34, 35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 365; *Homilist*, vol. ii., p. 523. ii. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 397. ii. 36-8—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 6. ii. 37.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 55. ii. 39-52.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 148.

Chap. ii., ver. 40.—"And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him."

I. "THE Child grew." He grew in stature, and He grew in character and goodness. He did not stand still. Although it was God Himself who was revealed to us in the life of Jesus Christ, yet this did not prevent us from being made like unto Him in all things, sin only excepted. Each one of us, whether old or young, must remember that progress, improvement, going on, advance, is the only condition, the only way of our becoming like Christ, and therefore like God. The world moves, and we must all move with it.

II. And then come three things which the text puts before us as those in which our Lord's earthly education, in which the advance and improvement of His earthly character, added to His youthful and childlike powers. (1) It speaks of His strength and character. It says "He waxed strong in spirit." What strength is to the body, that strength of character is to the mind. (2) And the next thing which the text speaks of is wisdom. It says the Child was "filled with wisdom." Wisdom, as it were, was poured into Him, and His mind opened wider and wider to take it in. He drank in whatever wisdom there was in the knowledge of those about Him; He drank in the heavenly wisdom also which comes down from the Fountain of all wisdom. You, too, have this to gain day by day. (3) And the next thing is the grace or favour of God—or, as it says at the end of the chapter, the grace, or favour, of God and man;—the grace, the goodness, the graciousness of God, which calls forth grace and goodness and graciousness in man. Our

blessed Lord had this always, but even in Him it increased more and more. So may it be with you.

A. P. STANLEY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 136.

HOLINESS in Childhood.

In the history of the saints there are two things chiefly remarkable. One is the depth of personal religion which they have displayed at an age when, in these days, we are wont to look upon the children as little more than sentient and irresponsible beings. The other remarkable feature is their precocity of general character and powers. I speak of the precocity of moral and spiritual life; the integrity and strength of character which youths have shown. They have begun to live and act as men among men, while as yet they were hardly in the dawn of manhood. These later ages have lost faith in the miraculous conception and holy Childhood of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the type and pledge of our regeneration in holy baptism, and of the development of our regenerate life.

I. Note what is the effect of sin after Baptism upon the regenerate nature. Its effect is to hinder the advance of our sanctification; and if so, it is no less than a direct antagonist of our regeneration, and a defeat of the purpose of God in our new birth of the Spirit; it is a resistance to the preventing grace of God, a refusal to be led by Him, and to follow His guidance and illumination. How little parents seem to know what they are doing when they make light of their children's early sins. They are doing nothing less than their best to undo God's grace in their regeneration, to make their salvation doubtful, and their future sorrows and losses many and inevitable.

II. We may learn what is the true relation of repentance to regeneration. The necessity for repentance arises out of the disobedience of the regenerate, and from the falls of those that sin grievously after baptism. The repentance of baptized men is as the difficult and precarious recovery of those who, after the partial cure of a death-sickness, fall into relapse. The powers of nature are wasted, the virtues of medicine baffled, and the disease grows doubly strong—a sad exchange for them who once walked in white raiment and were numbered among the children of God.

III. Note in what it is that they who have been kept and sanctified from their regeneration exceed the blessedness of penitents. They have never fallen away from their first estate. Let us then, by prayers and labours, by word and by example,

strive to rear up the elect of God, from their childhood, in the sanctity of Jesus Christ.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 17.

Chap. ii., vers. 40, 49, 52 (with Mark vi. 3; John iv. 34, x. 18, 30).

THE Germ of Christian Manhood.

Man and God are in eternal relation. As you cannot have an upper without an under; a brother without sister or brother; a son without a father or mother, so you cannot have a true conception of man without God. It lies in the very nature of the Father that He will not leave us men, and it is in our structure that we cannot rest without our Father. Man had lost God. Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God's mighty and age-filling effort to put Himself within the throbbing heart of humanity.

I. This perfect correspondence between Jesus the Son and God the Father is the source of all true and enduring growth. Man getting into his true relationship to the Father gets to the source of all life and progress. Apart from God true manhood is an impossibility. We must come into fellowship with Him, be partakers of His nature. That is the one and only garden in which the plants of righteousness can be grown.

II. Such trust in a communion with the Father is the source of cheerful patience and serene self-control. It is hurry that enfeebles us and takes the beauty out of our work. We will not mature. Our "hour" is always come, and we are restless for the tented field. We do not compel leisure, or seek the strength that is born in solitude, and so we are poor weaklings, beaten by the first foe we meet and able to offer nothing to God that will stand the test of His consuming fires.

III. The spontaneity of self-sacrifice, one of the surest marks of a perfecting manhood, is due to this trust in the Father, and consequent acceptance of His will and work, as the absolute rule and business of life. Nothing reveals the prodigious interval between us and Christ like the difficulty we find in sacrificing ourselves for the welfare of His Church and of the world.

IV. This, too, is the secret of the plenary power of men. If there is one thing science has fixed beyond all question, it is this, that you cannot get the living from the dead; that a man must *be* in order to do. Jesus Himself partakes of the fulness of the Father, and so becomes the fulness of the Godhead, and

out of His fulness we receive—grace for grace. Partaking of God's nature, by being possessed of the mind of Christ, we live His victorious life, and get His full use of nature, His fine self-control, and His ever-fruitful service.

J. CLIFFORD, *The Dawn of Manhood*, p. 34.

REFERENCES: ii. 40.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 72; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 34; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 89; B. F. Westcott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 17. ii. 40-52.—R. Lorimer, *Bible Studies in Life and Truth*, p. 119; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 127; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 31.

Chap. ii., vers. 41, 42.—"Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast."

IT was at twelve years old that Jewish boys came personally under the obligations of the law of Moses. Up to that age they had been treated as children, taught by their parents at home, but not yet expected to obey the harder precepts, such as fasting, or attending at Jerusalem at the three great feasts of the year. But at twelve years old they were called "Sons of the Law" or "Sons of the Precept;" and this signified that they now entered upon the second stage of life, and were no longer mere children. Henceforth they were old enough to have knowledge of their own, and to obey for themselves. When, therefore, our Lord was come to this age, Joseph and Mary, who had gone regularly up to Jerusalem in the former years by themselves, took, for the first time, their wonderful Child with them, not doubting that in this as in everything else, it was their duty to fulfil all righteousness—that is, to obey the rules and orders of the law of God under which they lived.

I. Observe, first, that when the Lord is old enough, there is no question at all on the part of Mary and Joseph as to whether He shall be brought to Jerusalem for Jewish Confirmation. They did not doubt at all about it, they simply came at the due time to Jerusalem.

II. Still less did the heavenly Child Himself object. He was altogether obedient and dutiful to His mother, and to him who was called His father. No shadow of that wilfulness and uncorrected disobedience which we see so often in families, when boys and girls are allowed to do very much as they will, and judge for themselves whether they will do this thing or that, or whether they will refrain from it.

III. Observe how instantly our Lord feels that He is engaged

in something higher now even than obedience to His earthly mother. It is His Father's business! Obedience to His mother has brought Him there, and fitted Him to come there. But now He is old enough to feel that he is engaged in God's business; in His heavenly Father's business. His brow is loftier. His look is changed. The sweet and dutiful Child has become, visibly, the Servant and Son of God. So I understand the words of the text, which says that they understood not the words which He spake unto them. They found Him altered; not less dutiful nor less sweet and obedient than before; but there was a loftier tone in His duty, and a deeper cause for His obedience, for He had begun to be, in His own Person, a Son of the Lord, and the obligation of His heavenly Father's business at once weighed upon His spirit and lifted it up.

G. MOBERLY, *Plain Sermons at Brighstone*, p. 12.

Chap. ii., vers. 41-52.

THIS passage is one of peculiar interest, as this account which it gives is the only circumstance mentioned of our blessed Lord from His childhood till He was thirty years of age. And while it contains much matter for deeper reflection, it bears at once on the surface this information—that He was living in strict obedience to the law of Moses, and in wonderful lowliness and meekness, was being brought up as any child of human parents might be.

I. Our Lord does not appear before us in His childhood like the child Samuel, dwelling always in the Temple, removed from the ways of common men; but He is disclosed to us in very great humility in the ways of common life, as ordinary children are brought up in subjection and retirement, differing only in that quick understanding in things divine which arises from the love and fear of God. Of this, perhaps, one reason was that our Lord has called upon us to imitate Him more especially in meekness and lowliness; and humility is best secured and guarded in the most ordinary stations of life, and in the most common circumstances of obscurity and poverty. Another reason for our blessed Saviour's thus taking upon Himself this ordinary condition as a child may be this: in order that all men in their station in life may be able to imitate and follow Him, which they could not do so well if He had appeared as one set apart from other men, as some of His own prophets and servants had been. A third reason may be that our Lord thus learned, as man, to sympathise and have a fellow-feeling with the lot of

mankind; in all their infirmities, in all their trials; to be a Child among children, in a condition not differing from theirs,—this was the choice of His love for them.

II. We hear nothing more of our Lord's childhood, but it is quite enough if we know and receive this. It at once raises the common life of us all, especially of all children, up to heaven. If God, then, was so wonderfully present and hiding Himself in that lowly condition, in things that appeared outwardly like those of other children, and the usual ways of life, He may be now also spiritually present in the hearts and lives of children who are born again in Baptism as the sons of God, although the world knows nothing of it.

I. WILLIAMS, *Sermons on the Epistles and Gospels*, vol. i., p. 119.

WE have here—

I. A glimpse of our Lord's *outward* life in childhood. The evangelists tell us almost nothing of the events of our Lord's outward life during His first thirty years. There was perhaps little to tell. One day would pass much like another, and the words of St. Luke with reference to the childhood of John the Baptist were probably true also of the childhood and youth of our Lord: "He was in the desert, till the time of His showing to Israel." Our Lord passed through a truly human development, and was thus in all things like unto His brethren. The outward scene of this development was the quiet household circle of Joseph and Mary. Of their life St. Luke has only one thing of importance to tell us: "And His parents went every year to Jerusalem to the Feast of the Passover." Yet this simple fact is sufficient; it gives us a concise summary of the calm piety which ruled the spirit of the family life in Joseph and Mary's home. In those few words the evangelist paints for us, in this picture of the life in which our Lord grew up, the three noblest things which, since the Fall, our earthly life has had to show: piety, household virtue and happiness, patriotism.

II. On one of these yearly journeys an event happened which gives us a glimpse of the *inward* life of our Lord during His childhood. In the Temple, whither He went with His parents, He felt Himself at home, far more than in Nazareth. Here He felt as if in His Father's house; here were the scenes of dear memories and work. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" How is it that ye sought Me? Since I was not with you, where could I be but in the Temple? Ah, yes, if we rightly understood the heart of Christ, we would never

be in perplexity, never in error, where we have to seek Him, when He is lost to us. Wist ye not—have ye not heard it from the mouth of angels, shepherds, magi, Simeon and Anna and above all from the words of prophecy—that I *must* be about My Father's business? Another Father than Joseph seeks Me; I am not alone your son, O Mother! but the Son of the Highest. My true element is the life of direct communion and nearness to Him, about His most direct charge and business; yes, even in His house. "I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." R. ROTHE, *Nachgelassene Predigten*, vol. i., p. 239.

REFERENCES: ii. 41, 42.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 45. ii. 41-52.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 16; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 56. ii. 41-54.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 159.

SOCIETY IN RELIGION. Chap. ii., ver. 42.

I. Companionship in religion is evidently the will of God, and is expressly commanded us by Him. Thus, in the Old Testament, we find the appointment of certain solemn feasts, at which the Israelites were to meet and rejoice before God in Jerusalem—at the feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. That rejoicing was to be universal, was to be shared by all. Every class, every age, father and child, master and servant, stranger and homeborn, were to join in celebrating the Lord's goodness, and take part together in setting forth His praise. Nor was it only on occasions of gladness that there was to be this combining of all classes of the people together; but on other occasions as well. In mourning, as in rejoicing, they were to unite. The Jewish religion was eminently a social religion. It had a place for all classes and all ages of the people; and all, of every age, sex, and rank were expected to fill that place.

II. Nor is it otherwise when we pass to the New Dispensation. There, too, as of old, religion takes a social shape. There, too, men are seen uniting in worship. Such was our religion at its first beginning. The multitude were together; they worshipped together; they were much in one another's company, and because they were together they were strong. The weak brother was kept from falling, the waverer was made firm by the countenance and encouragement of companions more established in the faith. And so it is still. To be united in religion; to walk to the House of God as friends; to have one another's aid and countenance in resisting temptation, and in striving after good; to feel that

other hearts besides our own love the Lord Jesus Christ—this is at once our truest happiness and best comfort. They who are so bonded together will ever experience the greatest blessing, and they will at the same time be conferring a blessing on their fellows. They will be like lights in the world. All who see them, who come within reach of their influence, will be obliged to confess that God is in them of a truth. And from confessing this they will often be led to imitate them, and so the little leaven of godliness will spread as was promised; and Christ will come to be honoured, more and more, in the hearts and lives of His people.

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Sermons preached in Country Churches*, p. 33.

REFERENCES: ii. 42.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 31. ii. 42-45.—B. Warfield, *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. ii., pp. 301, 321. ii. 42-51.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 406. ii. 43.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. ii., p. 523. ii. 44.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,724.

Chap. ii., ver. 46.—"And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the Temple."

I. CHRIST has a house here below as well as in heaven above. Here is the light of His Word imparted to us; here is His dwelling and here are His provisions; the table which He furnishes for us. We must not surely think to find our Saviour in the highways of ambition and pride, in the pleasures of wealth or luxury, or in the eager pursuit of anything belonging to this world. These things are not to be found in the house of His Father, neither may they come nigh His dwelling. But if we seek for Christ we shall find Him in the methods of virtue and the paths of God's commandments; in the persons of the poor, and in the blessed privilege of waiting upon the distressed; in the hours of our own most serious retirements. We shall find Him in holy readings and pious meditations, in the offices of religion and in the house of prayer.

II. Sure enough Christ is here; here most especially does He show and manifest Himself to the humble, devout, and faithful soul. For although He is here, and here He manifests Himself, yet all do not see Him here, but only the pure in heart; even as He Himself afterwards taught in the Sermon on the Mount, saying, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." So it was indeed when at the first He came to His Temple veiled in our flesh, forty days only after His birth; for the holy Simeon, the devout Anna, the blessed Virgin, the

righteous Joseph saw the Lord; but from other eyes He was hidden: to the thoughtless and the worldly, to the self-willed, and to the proud, the Child that day presented in the Temple seemed merely the ordinary offspring of mean parents, only those faithful servants of God saw Him that should redeem Israel, and be a Light to lighten the Gentiles. An habitual delight in God's House; an habitual reverence and awe here; and a continual remembrance, when we return to the world, of the things we have heard and seen and professed, and of which we have been partakers here—these are the only sure signs that we do not come here in vain—that we here learn of Christ, and have a real communion with Him.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 7.

Chap. ii., vers. 46, 47.

THE story of our Lord's listening to the doctors in the Temple and questioning them shows how He compelled a set of men, who were the slaves of words or rather of letters, who believed that all power lay in them, to confess a mightier power in Him.

I. This is the subject which is especially forced upon us by the text. There were met in the Temple a number of grave men, full of all the learning which could be got from the traditions of the past; full, as they thought, of all the learning which could be got from the words and lives of patriarchs, lawgivers, holy men. Age and the knowledge of what former times had bequeathed were theirs. They were the shepherds of the people. Whether the sheep went right or wrong depended mainly on their submission to this guidance or their neglect of it. Into this grave and venerable consistory there enters a Boy just twelve years of age. He stands among the Rabbis, not affrighted certainly by their dignity, with no sign of bashfulness, but also with none of forwardness. He is not eager to speak. He wishes to listen. He pronounces on nothing. He is not above the scribes, but is sitting at their feet. He desires to know what they think about this commandment in the law, about this sentence of David or Isaiah: "All who heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers."

II. The subject is for us no less than for the Rabbis. Consider some of the lessons which lie in it. (1) There is in many divines, and in many Christians who are not divines, a great fear of questions. "Certain things," they say, "have been settled long

ago. To disturb the settlement is perilous. If we are humble and modest we shall be content without knowledge of Divine things. Probabilities, distant approximation to knowledge, are all to which creatures such as we are can aspire." But we find Christ beginning His pilgrimage as a questioner. I believe that Christ has been asking questions from that day to this; that He is asking questions of us all, divines and laymen, now; that the questions come to us in multitudes of shapes, through a multitude of lips. I am greatly afraid that when we try to silence any of these questions we are trying to silence the voice of Christ, in others and in ourselves. (2) Statements like these are liable to be misunderstood, as if one wished to discourage reverence for the past, as if one thought there were no oracles of God which were stronger and deeper than all the reasonings and speculations of men. Just because I would uphold reverence for the past, I dare not stifle one anxious question of men respecting the faith of other days, respecting the oracles of God. The Rabbis did not reverence the past. They accepted its decrees. They had no fellowship with the life and sufferings of its men. No men needed so much to become little children to recover the wisdom of children. That they might attain that wisdom the Child came amongst them, listened to them, asked them questions, answered their questions. That same Child, who has the government on His shoulders, hears us, questions us, answers us for the same end.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 91.

REFERENCE: ii. 47.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 88.

Chap. ii., vers. 48, 49.

THE Finding of Christ in the Temple.

I. One of the things which it would have been absolutely impossible for the intellect of a human infant to grasp would be the idea of Divine Sonship, the idea of that relation in which the Son of God stands to the Eternal Father. There must have been a period, then, in the life of Jesus of Nazareth, in which He awoke, as it were, to spiritual consciousness, and came to know who and what He really was. The light of this knowledge may have broken in upon Him by degrees. It probably did so. There were probably voices that came and went, voices that whispered into the ear of that wondrous Child mysterious hints of the unseen world and of the abandoned glory, long before they spoke out with distinct and unmistakable utterance: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

II. "He went down with them." He, knowing now who He was, and for what He was intended, He, *consciously* now the incarnate Son of God, "went down with them and was subject unto them; but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart." We gather one or two concluding lessons from this verse. (1) A lesson of the importance of patient waiting and preparation and biding of God's time, for all true workers for God. None ever longed as Jesus longed to be about His Father's business, and to exalt His Father's glory, and yet, at the Father's bidding, He went quietly away to spend eighteen years of preparation and discipline, until the time came for His manifesting unto Israel. (2) A lesson as to the perfect understanding and sympathy which the life of Jesus establishes between Him and His people. Jesus did not anticipate the various stages of life; He did not crowd the duties of one period in amongst the duties of another; His human existence was one of gradual, regular, perfect development. (3) A lesson as to the dignity of human life. It has been a pleasure to some persons to cast contempt on the nature they wear and on the race to which they belong. Writers of note have done this. But surely such persons must forget or disbelieve that the eternal Son of God condescended to wear the nature they vilify, and to engage in the occupations and pursuits on which they pour out the malignity of their scorn. One glance at that humble home of Nazareth dispels such thoughts and throws a halo of dignity and honour round our common humanity.

G. CALTHROP, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 90.

REFERENCES: ii. 48.—Phillips Brooks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 353. ii. 48, 49.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 122.

Chap. ii., ver. 49.—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

THESE are brave, heroic words. They breathe a spirit of ardour and devotion to duty. They are not the language of one who is to make pleasure his grand aim in life, and is minded to give himself to indolence and ease. They betoken a high and manly principle, a noble self-respect, a strong decision of character.

I. Each of us is to make the Lord Jesus Christ our one supreme model. From the earliest stages of His life, He stands before us as our faultless pattern. In His childhood, in His young manhood, He claims our closest imitation. Just as He entered

upon life, so should you. Though the story of His life be short, it is wonderfully comprehensive. It seems as though He touched humanity at every point. Hardly an aspect of our earthly life in which He may not be seen. Whatever noble ideals of life you have do not forget to set Jesus Christ above them all.

II. The character of one's career in life may generally be augured from its outset. These first recorded words of Jesus struck the keynote of His whole after-life. Now, it is safe to say, that the ten years that intervene between the ages of twelve and twenty-two are almost decisive of a man's subsequent course. This is the formative period; and in so far the most important part of life. It is then that the character is formed. It is then that the moral nature is taking shape. If habits of indolence are formed; if languor and irregularity are indulged; if selfishness and conceit are encouraged; almost in all certainty your life will be a failure. The man who carries the day is he whose strong sense of personal duty and responsibility replies to all who would tempt him to idleness and self-indulgence, "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?"

III. Learn from the text that the present life is intended for work, labour, and business. "I must be about—business," said the Divine Youth, who is our only perfect model. We are not sent into this world for play, nor for self-indulgent ease; Jesus was not. We are not sent here to enjoy the maximum of pleasure with the minimum of toil; that is a wrong conception of life altogether; work is not a mere means to an end, a hardship to be submitted to, as an avenue to enjoyment; nay, the world is intended to be a great workshop, and each of us is to take his own share, and find his own fitting department.

IV. If we are Christians, our daily work, whatever it be, is to be viewed as our Father's business. The most effective of all ways in which God is served, is by living to Him in everything, consecrating to His glory all the details of our ordinary prosaic life.

J. THAIN DAVIDSON, *Sure to Succeed*, p. 251.

THE Child Jesus a Pattern for Children.

I. The Child Jesus was a diligent Scholar. He did not neglect His tasks, or slur them over anyhow, or think, as perhaps some of you think, that getting out of school was the best part of the whole business. We might be quite sure that

He diligently attended to the wise Rabbis who asked and answered questions, who uttered so many wise and witty proverbs, and told so many pretty stories, if only because He Himself was, in after years, so wise in asking and answering questions, and spoke so many proverbs and parables which the world will never let die. When Joseph and Mary brought Him up all the way from Nazareth to Jerusalem, He was so charmed to listen to what the wise men of Jerusalem had to say, that He stayed on in the Temple three days after his parents had left the city. And it was not to see the beautiful courts and colonnades that He stayed; nor to listen to the exquisite singing of the choirs; nor to see the priests offering sacrifices on the altars; much less was it to gaze on the wonders of the streets, the markets, the bazaars,—He stayed simply that He might sit at the feet, *i.e.* attend the classes, of the learned and venerable doctors of the Jerusalem schools, both asking them questions and answering the questions they asked of Him.

II. Mark again that this good Scholar was also a good Son. The Hebrew boys of our Lord's time were taught good manners, as well as good morals. They were enjoined by their parents and their masters, to salute everyone they met in the streets, to say to him, "Peace be with thee." And the Boy Jesus was well brought up, and was full of courtesy and kindness and good will; for not only did He grow in favour with men in general, but He had a large circle of kinsfolk and friends who loved Him and were glad to have Him with them. We know, too, that He had never grieved His parents before; in His eagerness to learn He let them go on their way home without Him. For when they had found Him in the Temple they were so astonished that He should have given them the pain of seeking Him sorrowfully that they cannot blame Him as for a fault, but can only ask Him why He has treated them thus. He must indeed have been a good son to whom His mother could speak as Mary spoke to Jesus.

III. This good Scholar and good Son was also a good Child of God. He was always about His Father's business. He felt that He must be about it, wherever He went, whatever He did. The one great thing He had to do, the one thing which above all others He tried to do, was to serve God His Father, not simply to become wise, and still less to please Himself, but to please God by growing wise in the knowledge and obedience of His commandments.

S Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 16.

Chap. ii., vers. 49, 50.

THE Epiphany of Work.

This Gospel may be called the Epiphany of Christ to the world of youth—to that large portion of the great human family which has life before it, with its boundless capacities of use and abuse, of happiness and misery, of good and evil. How and in what sense is it an Epiphany to the world of youth? To answer this question intelligently, and at the same time to give breadth to the subject, is by no means limited to one age or one circumstance of human life; we combine the two in the words of the text—"Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" and "He went down with His parents and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

I. The Epiphany before us, is, in the first place, that of the two lives, the seen and the unseen, the relative and the personal; in other words the human relationship to the Divine. For a considerable portion of the life of all men the two relationships are at one. The parent represents God to the child, and the child sees God through the parent. It is a sweet and lovely time for the mother, which Nature perhaps would bid her protract. She feels that only good can come of it; so pure and so heavenward are her own aspirations for her child. Cannot her son continue to seek heaven except through her? Is there any moral blank, is there any spiritual necessity to forbid her saying, as a thing for all time and for all life, "So be it, it is good for us to be thus"? Yes; she must learn the great lesson, "All souls are Mine!" The child has a Father in heaven, and at the first dawn of reason he must be about his Father's business.

II. "He went down with them and was subject unto them." And this is all that is told us of the boyhood of the Saviour. The one feature of His thirty years' education upon which the Word of God dwells, is subjection; all else is taken for granted; the industry and the piety and the beautiful example, and this only is dwelt upon. "He was subject" because, being interpreted, He was courteous, He was reverent, He was generous, He was courageous, He loved Himself last, He thought Himself least; He practised in youth the graces of charity; He trod from His boyhood the way to the Cross. His Father's kingdom was the interest of His boyhood, and submission was its work; from this beginning it was but a natural progress to the long self-repression of the village home and the drudging workshop, thence to the Baptism in Jordan, and the temptation in the desert, thence into the homeless unrest of the ministry,

the scorn and rejection of men, the dulness and coldness even of His own, and at last the agony of Calvary and the shameful death of the Cross.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 49.

REFERENCES: ii. 49.—A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 421; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 59; A. C. Price, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 273; vol. iii., p. 292; B. S. Bird, *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 126; H. R. Reynolds, *Notes of the Christian Life*, p. 185; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 1; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 228.

Chap. ii., ver. 51.

THE Christian Family.

I. The household is the parents' kingdom. Only here can each one find food for every faculty. The family gives a practical solution to the great problems of moral truth. It is the typical form of the vast organisations that belong to human life. It teaches subordination in love, and subordination is only another word for fitting together. In a society like this, though subordination inside of the family is natural and easy, outside of the family it is reluctant and mechanical, and is very often unjust. Weak men are perpetually governing strong men. Ignorance is in ascendency over knowledge. In a democratic community subordination is founded on the actual conditions which subsist between man and man; but in the family mutual subjection is taught, and the man who is thoroughly radicated in the intelligence and love of mutual subjection in the household is essentially fitted to become a peaceable and good citizen.

II. Order and government are likewise taught in the family, and it is the government or order which springs from parental love that carries with it a sense of its fitness and necessity. Love is the supreme necessity. Love is not a thing that is for ever submitting, as many suppose it to be. It is regent, it is imperial in its very nature. It tends to command, and in the family fitly. There we have the roots of order of government, and nowhere else in anything like so perfect a state.

III. The family also teaches, as we can scarcely find it taught otherwise, the true doctrine of sin and penalty. There is but one place where penalty can be justified; namely, where it is a remedy for the sufferer or a safeguard for those who are round about him; and where it is administered in the physician's spirit. The administration of pain and penalty in governments and courts is exceedingly rude and imperfect; but the administration

of pain and penalty in the family is beautiful from the beginning to the end.

IV. We learn in the family, likewise, the doctrine of the liberty of law. There is no law in the household that overruns sickness or weakness, or change of mind. Law, if rightly employed, is helpful, is strengthening, is nursing; and in the household you see how expansible and adaptable it is.

H. W. BEECHER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 372.

REFERENCES: ii. 51.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 74; S. Baring-Gould, *One Hundred Sermon Sketches*, p. 125; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 372. ii. 51, 52.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, 2nd series, p. 85.

Chap. ii., ver. 52.

THE text naturally divides itself into four heads. There is a twofold development spoken of, and a twofold result or concomitant. We are called upon to observe the growth of Jesus: (1) in bodily stature; (2) in wisdom, and as a concomitant of these, to behold Him increasing; (3) in favour with men, and (4) in favour with God.

I. We know that among the Jews no one was qualified to be a priest who had any bodily defect or blemish. It behoved the sacred historian therefore to show that our great High Priest had no bodily disqualification for His office. He was destined, after thirty years' spiritual obscurity, to lead a life of energetic labour and endurance of hardship for the space of three years. In this a frame capable of ordinary fatigue was surely necessary. Even for the toil of this daily employment, Jesus needed those bodily powers of which St. Luke briefly describes the increase.

II. We may assume that, whatever the age of our Lord was, His wisdom corresponded to His age. There is a prescient wisdom, sometimes found in early years, which gives way to and is succeeded by the maturer wisdom of the man, just as that in its turn passes on to the grave and retrospective wisdom of the elder. Jesus increased in growth and in that wisdom which suited His years. He is represented to us, in the sacred narrative, not only as receiving wisdom from above, but as acquiring wisdom by communication with others. In the development of Jesus there was nothing like forcing, no hurry or impatience, no attempt either to produce a sensation, or to impress His brethren and neighbours with an idea of His extraordinary powers.

III. We see the Child Jesus increasing in favour with men—all, that is, who came into communication with Him. The

favour of men is a test of certain qualities, without which no Christian character can lay claim to even relative perfection. No selfish, or ill-tempered, or peevish, or morose, or arrogant, or deceitful person can ever secure the favour even of relatives, much less that of any mixed society. The Child Jesus commended Himself to all who knew Him by every amiable and lovely quality, and grew up like some tender plant in the quiet vale of existence.

IV. And we are called upon to regard Him as increasing in favour with His heavenly Father. This is a sure concomitant of spiritual growth. We have to contemplate the Child Jesus, not as possessing at once the full favour of God, but as increasing in favour with Him. This shows the Saviour to be one of us. This marks His life on earth as progressive, passing through successive stages—each perfect of its kind, but one kind of perfection being higher than another.

G. BUTLER, *Sermons in Cheltenham College*, p. 27.

SILENT Growth.

I. Times come to all when the great realities of life and death stand out clear, if it is but for a moment, and the heart sees and feels what is of value and lasting and true. We want such times: the beginners want them to teach them how to begin; the older want them to encourage them to go on. But yet these critical times are as nothing compared to the daily, hourly, momentary appeal that is being made to everyone. Whether we know it or not, not a moment passes which does not add or take away something of our power of judging and seeing the things of God. This power of judging and seeing the things of God is a power of the Spirit, and is given by the Holy Spirit of God to those who open their hearts to God's truth, and live by it. This power of seeing, of putting the feeling in accord with higher feeling, of the getting the heart to thrill with the thrilling of Divine truth, and the mind to think out God's thoughts, is wisdom. It is the harvest gathered from life. God's world is all about us—God's world of created nature, fields and trees, rivers and sky; God's world of men and women, with all their hopes and fears; God's world of right and wrong, with all the strange permitted evil, and all the wonderful bringing out of good. To read God's thought in God's world is wisdom. "And Jesus increased in wisdom." The little valley and the country town, the lonely life, the quiet village amongst the hills, the grass beneath, the stars above, the life within the narrowing heights, the life views that streamed over them from outside,—

gave all the material wanted for wisdom. To Christ the sower that went forth to sow was a presence touching the heart, the mustard-seed cast into the ground a message of heavenly power. Not a sparrow, but His eye knew it as a part of God's alphabet. The women grinding corn, the very leaven in the daily bread, all were to Him thoughts thought out and passed on to us, lighted up with the light of the everlasting.

II. What a lesson of patient waiting this gives! The mind feels a sort of breathless awe when it tries to call up the idea of the Lord of lords, sitting a poor Man on the hill-side, and day by day, for thirty years, holding within His heart the wondrous knowledge of a Divine mission, and all the time treated by the villagers as one of themselves. All the sense of inward power, the thoughts that pierced the secrets of the world, the reformer's eye that saw through the tangle of human life, of its sorrows and its sins, conscious of the Redeemer's power to heal; the gathering greatness, the danger and the sacrifice grew more and more distant day by day to the solitary unacknowledged King on the hill-side; and yet He waited and waited, and gathered in new thoughts daily where others saw nothing, and grew in wisdom and was strong in spirit; and being strong in spirit did not move before His time.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 213.

REFERENCES: ii. 52.—S. James, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 76; R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 112; H. G. Robinson, *Man in the Image of God*, p. 167. iii. 1-23.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 37.

Chap. iii., vers. 2-14.

I. How shall we picture John the Baptist to ourselves? Great painters, greater than the world seems likely to see again, have exercised their fancy upon his face, his figure, and his actions. We must put out of our minds, I fear, at once, many of the loveliest of them all, those in which Raffaelle and others have depicted the child John, in his camel's-hair raiment, with a child's cross in his hand, worshipping the Infant Christ. There is also one exquisite picture, by Annibale Caracci, in which the blessed Babe is lying asleep, and the blessed Virgin signs to St. John, pressing forward to adore Him, not to awake his sleeping Lord and God. But such imaginations, beautiful as they are and true in heavenly, spiritual sense, which therefore is true eternally for you and me and all mankind, are not historic fact. For St. John the Baptist said himself, "And I knew Him not."

The best picture which I can recollect of John is the great picture by Guido of the magnificent lad sitting on the rock, half-clad in his camel's-hair robe, his stalwart hand lifted up to denounce he hardly knows what, save that things are going all wrong, utterly wrong to him. The wild rocks are around him, the clear sky is over him, and nothing more.

II. St. John preached the most common—let me say boldly, the most vulgar, in the good old sense of the word—the most vulgar morality. He tells his hearers that an awful ruin was coming unless they repented and mended. How fearfully true his words were the next fifty years proved. The axe, he said, was laid to the root of the tree, and the axe was the heathen Roman, even then master of the land. But God, not the Roman Cæsar merely, was laying the axe. And He was a good God, who only wanted goodness, which He would preserve; not badness, which He would destroy. Therefore men must not merely repent and do penance, they must bring forth fruits meet for penance; do right instead of doing wrong lest they be found barren trees to be cut down and cast into that everlasting fire of God, which, thanks be to His Holy Name, burns for ever, unquenchable by all men's politics and systems and political or other economies, to destroy out of God's kingdom all that offendeth and whatsoever loveth and maketh a lie—oppressors, quacks, cheats, hypocrites, and the rest.

C. KINGSLEY, *All Saints' Day and Other Sermons*, p. 256.

REFERENCE: iii. 2.—J. M. Sloan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 355.

Chap. iii., ver. 3.—**"And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins."**

I. THE teaching of St. John the Baptist, as it is described to us in Scripture, was perhaps different to what many would have expected. He had not only been sanctified to God in the world, and had been born of holy parents and kept unspotted from the world; but when he came forth to preach repentance he had been dwelling for thirty years in the wilderness, not only apart from other men, but living in a very hard and severe way, unlike other men. When, therefore, he came down among the cities of men as the great preacher of repentance; and found himself surrounded with multitudes of all kinds given up to sins and vices of which he knew nothing; we might have expected that he would have said something of the desert and his own

more excellent mode of life, that he would have called upon all men to retire from so wicked a world, and to live, like himself, quite disengaged from all temporal things. But the holy Baptist's teaching was far different from this; he was as gentle and considerate to others as he was severe and unsparing to himself; they confessed their sins unto him, and he entered into all their temptations; and instead of requiring of them great and difficult things, he told them to avoid their besetting sins and temptations, and so amend their lives.

II. It may be observed that the teaching of the Bible is throughout of this nature. Men are inclined to put themselves forward for great things, and for putting great things before others, because this gratifies the secret pride of our hearts; and certain it is that there is nothing so great but that we ought to do it in religion and which God will, if we seek Him, give us strength to do. But this great thing probably lies much nearer home than we are willing to suppose; it consists in overcoming ourselves and in breaking through some besetting sin which may seem a small matter: so it was in the teaching of the great preacher of repentance; he told men of some besetting temptation which lay at their own door—of that evil spirit who was watching and waiting for them in their daily life; which was first and beyond all things to be attended to.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. i., p. 20.

REFERENCES: iii. 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99. iii. 3, 4.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 267.

Chap. iii., ver. 4.—"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."

IT may be that many have never clearly understood what was meant by John being Christ's forerunner, why any forerunner was needed, and what truth is declared to us in this part of God's dispensations, which showed that he was needed.

I. The subject is very vast, and might be illustrated by many examples, taken either from history or from private life. And the truth contained in it is this: that Christ's work has never been done effectually in men's hearts, except so far as the work of His forerunner has been done beforehand; that the baptism of the Spirit requires the previous baptism of water; or, in other words, that no man can profitably receive the truths of the Gospel, unless they find his heart made ready by repentance; unless they find him in that state that he knows the evil of his heart, and hates it, and longs to be delivered from it.

II. Why is it that, within our own knowledge, the work of Christ's Spirit is yet wrought so imperfectly? Why are not our lives and thoughts Christian, as well as our outward profession? Is it not because with us too, in so many instances, Christ had been preached to us without His forerunner; because we have never been prepared by repentance to seek His salvation aright?

III. Again, the preparation of Christ's forerunner is needed, because we are apt, as the world goes on, to take up our notions of right and wrong from those about us; to call good what the world calls good, and evil what the world calls evil. The business of Christ's forerunner was to make men aware of this; to show them that their notions of good and evil wanted correction; that far less faults than they dreamed of would be their condemnation in God's judgment; that far higher virtues than those which they thought excellent were needed to enter into the kingdom of heaven.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 109.

Chap. iii., vers. 4-6.—"The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight," etc.

EARNESTNESS.

Of all men that ever lived, John the Baptist was one great concentrated earnestness. The earnestness of which I wish to speak consists in a "prepared way" and straight paths.

I. Before there can be earnestness, there must first be: (1) A fixed conviction that God loves you; that God desires to have you; that Christ is waiting to come into your heart; that He will soon be here; and that your eternal happiness depends upon whether you are ready to meet Him as a forgiven man, as a holy man, as a prepared man. (2) Next, upon these facts it is to have made up your mind thoroughly, once and for all, that you will be a Christian—cost what it may. (3) It is to have made up your mind that nothing whatever shall stand in the way—no object, however dear, no sin, however pleasant. (4) It is to have some great object in view, something steadily in hand, something you are living up to—some good work which you will enterprise, something for love, something for God. (5) It is to be faithful and diligent in the use of means, as one who feels very weak, whose new warmth makes him feel very cold. (6) It is to do all as in a very short time. "My Saviour will soon be here,—I must keep all the approaches clear."

II. Let me ask three things: (1) Are you, as yet, really in earnest about your soul? Are you earnest in proportion to the greatness of the subject? (2) Is the way of God prepared? Is it a highway? Could He come in and find everything open and ready to receive Him? (3) Are all your "paths," your little "ways"—your paths, are they all straight, quite straight? With a God so earnest in all He is doing for you, with death so earnest all about you, with an enemy so very earnest in your breast, with so much to be done in that heart of yours before it is ready, with such a work for God to be done in the world before you die, with such issues at stake—a Christ so near—it is time to be earnest.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1871, p. 137.

REFERENCES: iii. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 3. iii. 7.—*New Manual of Sunday School Addresses*, p. 52. iii. 7-18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 127. iii. 8, 9.—*Ibid.*, p. 46.

Chap. iii., ver. 10.—**"And the people asked Him, saying, What shall we do then?"**

DUTY.

The final stage of religion is duty. Everything else, however comforting, however holy, however true, is only its cradle. The maturity of man is his obedience. If I had to define duty, I should say that it is doing what is right—that is, what conscience and the Bible tell us to do—in any relation of life. And since we have all a relation to God in everything we do, it is doing what is right towards God, or what is right towards man, for God's sake. But we have to do this morning with duty as it connects itself with Advent. And let me mention one of the two points in which duty and Advent meet.

I. In every Advent of Christ, whether it be those continual Advents by which He now approaches and knocks at the door of a man's heart, or whether it be the early harbingers and the tokens of His arrival, when He shall return to our earth again, it is of immense importance that we shall be able quickly to recognise and clearly to perceive it. Now keen religious perception always goes with a high moral state. Trace it as you may, the fact is certain, that a life of duty and a ready apprehension of truth always go together.

II. Another link which fastens duty to Advent is this: that our Lord, when He comes, would wish to find us each at our own proper work, whatever that work may be. I gather this from three things: (1) First, as far as we have any record, Christ, when He came before, always chose those whom He

found at their work. The call did not find them in their retirement, but in their engagements. (2) Christ Himself has said it, speaking of domestic duties, "Blessed is that servant whom his Lord, when He cometh, shall find so doing." (3) The Advent will be the end of all earthly work; and therefore it must find it done, else it will be undone for ever. Would you not wish Christ to have the joy of finding you, when He comes, where you ought to be, copying His busy, useful life, and doing right and important things for His glory, with the very motive that may be blessed when He comes to see you?

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1871, p. 153.

Chap. iii., vers. 10-14.

I. ST. JOHN'S three answers all go upon the principle of "doing our duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call us;" but they are the more striking as coming from a person like St. John, a person so entirely out of the ordinary course, to whom any of the names with which careless people delighted to brand those who have been led to a more than usually solemn sense of their condition before God, might be most fitly applied; he might be called an enthusiast, one who held very strange notions, a man whose religion had turned his head, and so forth; and yet you will perceive that this strange preacher of repentance who appeared to hold such extreme views about fasting and penance and the like, did, when applied to, give rules of holiness which seem to err all on the other side. Some persons would tell us that there is no religion in them at all, that they are only rules of morality, and that spiritual religion is something different from and beyond morality. Well, be it so; but still these were St. John's directions for preparing to meet Christ.

II. St. John did not say that this was the whole of the religion which He who came after him would have to teach; on the other hand, he used some mysterious language about a "baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire," which should contrast strongly with his own baptism, which was merely a baptism with water unto repentance. But although St. John knew better than most men the truth that Christ was coming as a revealer of mysteries, and a founder of a more spiritual religion, and a medium of much nearer communion with God than any which had yet been vouchsafed to man, he still laid the foundation in the performance of common duties, he still

preached this as the best preparation for the coming of Christ, that men should each in their own calling do their duty as in the fear of God. Do your duty where God has placed you; be honest, be diligent, be kind, be pitiful, not slothful in business, but yet in all things fearing the Lord; and though this may not be all, yet at least it is the beginning of all good things, and is the true foundation of the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 4th series, p. 346.

REFERENCES: iii. 10-14.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 151. iii. 10-15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p 153. iii. 15-22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 449.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"One mightier than I cometh."

EXPECTATION.

Have you never observed that everyone's character is determined by what he is living up to? Why is the Mohammedan an idle and self-indulgent man? Because he lives up to a corporeal and indolent and sensuous heaven. Why is the Brahmin a man of apathy? Because, after all his transmigrations, he has nothing to expect, according to his creed, but annihilation, absolute annihilation. Why does the believer grow holy and loving, but because he is always realising in his mind the heaven of holiness and love to which he is going? Certainly expectation is a duty.

I. But God has done with this faculty of expectation what He has done with all the natural powers and habits of the human mind—He has sanctified it and elevated it. And this is the way God has done it. He has thrown into it first truth, then affection, and then great delight, so He has made it hope. What is it? Expectation with desire from the beginning, hope has been the great principle of God's moral government of the world. The moment that man fell, and the present became unhappy, the antidote was hope: "I will put enmity;" "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." Observe, at once, the mind was sent off into the future for its comfort. It was the same with Abraham; he had nothing, he was to have everything. The Jews lived by their prophecies. All sacrifice speaks the same language. And now what is the aim, the consolation, the theme, the life of the whole Church, but the coming back of her dear Lord? And when He comes, there may be another future to look forward to still, and probably another and another and another.

II. Notice in this long line of expectation that the next thing in the succession is always greater and better than that which preceded it. The series is always rising—every prophecy has its range of fulfilment; first an early and historical one, then an inward and spiritual one, then an evangelical one in the life and death of Jesus Christ, then an ultimate one in yet future glories. If you could read it so, whenever anything happy comes to you—an answered prayer, a gift of God—you may always hear it saying, "I am only a pledge of something else; there is something better than I am behind." All along, at every stage, the principle is the same, and the words of the Baptist have their echo and their counterpart everywhere: "One mightier than I cometh."

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1871, p. 170.

REFERENCES: iii. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1,044; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. i., p. 99.

Chap. iii., ver. 17.—"Whose fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor; and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable."

JUDAISM and Christianity.

Christ came and hewed out for the waters of the old Judaism a new and fitting channel. He led it away from the political groove where it would have been destroyed by uniting it with a spiritual kingdom. He added to it other and deeper thoughts. Instead of saying that Christ caused a revolution which put back the progress of the world, we should say that He saved the revolution which was necessary from the violence which would have brought about its ruin; that He saved it from having to be done all over again; as, to give a political illustration, has been the case with the French Revolution. What now were the characteristics of the revolution?

I. It was destructive. Christ saw that the time had come, that the whole world of Jews and heathens was so choked up with chaff that a slow process would be ruin. He seized the moment, He accepted its dangers, and He sent forth ideas which flew along like flame, consuming, destroying, but also assimilating. "The chaff He burned up with unquenchable fire."

II. But if Christianity was destructive as a revolution it was also preservative. If Christ sent forth ideas which consumed the chaff, He sent them forth also to gather the wheat into His garner. No noble feelings or true thought, either in Judaism

or in heathenism, perished. They were taken up and woven into the new fabric.

III. Its third element was a civilising power. Neither Greek science nor Roman culture had power to spread beyond themselves. Rome did not try to civilise in the right way. Instead of drawing forth the native energies of conquered nations, it imposed on them from without the Roman education. It tried to turn them into Romans. The Christian teachers reversed the Roman mode of proceeding. Hence the peculiar character of any nation was not lost in Christianity, but so far as it was good developed and intensified. The people grew naturally into their distinctive place in the world.

S. A. BROOKE, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 47.

REFERENCES: iii. 18-20.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 49. iii. 19, 20.—*Ibid.*, p. 235; F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 270.

Chap. iii., vers. 21, 22.—"Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him."

CHRIST'S Baptism, a Token of Pentecost.

Without all question, there is a deep and mysterious connection between the baptism of our Saviour and the coming of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. They are, if we may so speak, parts of the same wonderful work of God, the saving Christian people by the kingdom of heaven. Christ's baptism was the beginning, the coming down of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost was the middle, the baptism of each Christian is, in a certain sense, part of the end.

I. Our Saviour was praying after His baptism when the Holy Ghost came upon Him; so the Apostles, when they returned from witnessing His ascension, continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, until He sent the Comforter, according to His promise. As it was the same heavenly Person who came down first upon the Head and afterwards upon the members, so there was, by God's providence, a great resemblance between the outward tokens given in the one case and in the other.

II. These outward tokens of the Holy Comforter's presence do not only make us sure of that presence, but also instruct us not a little in the manner and in the greatness of the change He works in us. (1) Water, for example, pure water, springing out of the earth, or dropping from heaven by the immediate gift of God, who sees not that it represents the refreshing and cleansing power of that Divine grace which, coming direct from God,

purifies the stain of our hearts, and makes us strong and active to keep the commandments? Who is not reminded by it of the living water which the Lord has promised to give us, not only to quench our thirst for the time, but to be in us "a well of water springing up to everlasting life"? (2) Again, what signified the fiery tongues? Surely they had the substance of of fire, because of the searching power of Christ's Spirit, which in a wonderful manner tries every man's heart of what sort it is, penetrating into all the dark corners of our souls, and where it is not resisted, enlightening, warming, melting all. (3) What are we to learn from the appearance of the Holy Ghost as a dove? The voice of the Holy Ghost in prayer, inwardly uttered in a Christian's heart, is like the unwearied melancholy tones of the dove. This reason is given us by a great and holy bishop, St. Augustine; and he adds another—the simple, harmless innocence of the dove; and yet another—its gentle, peaceful, loving nature, whereby it becomes the token both of truth and charity.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vii., p. 136; see also J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascension Day to Trinity*, p. 176.

REFERENCES: iii. 21, 22.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 75; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 75; vol. x., p. 294. iii. 21-3.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 50.

Chap. iii., ver. 22.—**"The Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him."**

THE descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove was an emblem of the new dispensation which the Saviour came to announce; and instead of the fiery law, delivered in the midst of blackness and darkness and tempest, and the deafening sound of the trumpet, the blessed Spirit descended in the form of a dove, and the assuring truth was taught that grace and truth had come by Jesus Christ.

I. As the brooding of the Spirit of God upon the face of the deep produced order and life in the beginning, so does He impart new life to the soul and open the eyes of the understanding, that we may behold the wonders of God's law.

II. In the fact that the Holy Ghost descended upon the Lord Jesus in the form of a dove, we are reminded that quietness is often essential to many of the operations of grace.

III. As the dove is an appropriate emblem of love, so the soul which is influenced by the blessed Spirit will abound in love to God and love to His people.

IV. The descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove should remind us that gentleness is a distinguishing mark of Christian character in which most of us have very much to learn. The sight of a gentle dove picking its food quietly in the midst of a crowded street, noisy with the busy hum of traffic, suggested a pleasant thought. The beautiful bird did not seem out of place, but it rather appeared to say, by its guileless, innocent ways, that worldly employments have no triumphs so complete as to excuse the surrender of the pure and meek virtues of which the dove is a symbol. Its white glistening plumage casts rays of brightness even on the stony pavement, trodden by the hurried footsteps of the trader and the money-changers, and its gentle eyes reflected the spirit of the Saviour's words: "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

J. N. NORTON, *Every Sunday*, p. 288.

Chap. iii., ver. 23.—"And Jesus Himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph."

THE Divinity of Christ.

Our discourse will turn upon the words, "As was supposed" Our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was "supposed" to be the son of Joseph. But the words of the text seem to imply that He was not actually the son of Joseph: they are an indirect testimony to that grand truth which the evangelist St. Luke has already recorded, and the taking away of which would be the overthrow of the Christian religion: "Therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God."

I. There is no dispute that Christ is spoken of in the Bible as God, but there is much dispute as to the sense in which the language ought to be understood. There can be no dispute that the name "God" is often used in the Bible, when it cannot for a moment be supposed that it is used in its high and incommunicable sense. Thus it is said to Moses, "I have made thee a god to Pharaoh,"—where Moses is so called evidently not as being properly a god, but as being in that instance or circumstance in the place of God, and doing that which it is God's office to do. But when you turn to the Bible, in order to determine whether it can only be in this secondary or figurative way that Christ is styled God, we are overwhelmed with proof that it must be in the same sense, and in as high a sense as the Father Himself is so styled. For Christ is called the Jehovah—a word of absolute signification, which is never given to any but the one true God.

II. Not only the titles but the attributes of Deity are ascribed in Scripture to Christ. The eternity of the Son is distinctly asserted; for Christ spoke of Himself as "He which is, and which was, and which is to come"—words which, like the name Jehovah, can only be interpreted as denoting independent and therefore eternal substance. Christ is also declared to be immutable, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and for ever;" omniscient, "Lord, Thou knowest all things;" omnipresent, "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them." These attributes are all ascribed to Him whom some suppose to have been only Joseph's son, and regard it as monstrous to look upon Him as God. Who can God be, if Christ be only man—Christ the eternal, Christ the omniscient, Christ the omnipresent?

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,281.

Chap. iv., vers. 1, 2.—"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered."

VICTORY over the Besetting Sin.

Our Lord, in defeating Satan's temptations, taught us also how to overcome them: (1) by answering Satan at once; (2) by not vouchsafing to enter into his subtleties; (3) our Lord teaches us that there is an order in Satan's temptations.

I. If thou canst not find out thy chief fault, apply thyself to any bad one. It is better to gather thyself to an earnest conflict with almost any one, than to lose thy time in debating which to grapple with. Whilst thou art engaged in earnest about one God will disclose to thee others. In this warfare there are some rules, alike for all sins; some special to each; some, which relate to self-knowledge; some, how to be on our guard; some, to help our repentance; some, whereby we may gain strength to fight. (1) It is of the very greatest moment to know the occasions of our sin, and the way in which it shows itself. To know the occasions, puts us on our guard to know how our sin shows itself, gives us the means of stopping it. (2) Even in graver sins, it is very needful to observe whether the temptation begins from within or from without. (3) We should try not only to abstain from sin, but also by God's help to gain the opposite grace. If thou wouldest save thyself from falling backward, thou shouldest throw thyself forward. If thou wouldest not slip back into sin, thou must stretch forward to Christ and His holiness.

II. Look next at the method of this warfare. This is a practice by which some have in a few months gained more than in years before. First go into thyself; ask of God light to see thyself, bear to know thyself, and to know well what thy sins are; and resolve firmly by thy Saviour's help to part with them, rather than with Him. Pray to persevere, and all the rest will be easier. Thinkest thou that it will be toilsome to thee, so day by day to remove every speck of sin? What is it, then, which it is so wearisome to cleanse? Is it something which concerns thee not, something for a time only, something for another? Truly it is for Another too. For it is for the All-Holy Trinity. It is that thine own soul, thine own self, thy very inmost self, may be enlarged to contain God and the love of God, that thy senses may desire nothing but what they have in that blessed-making sight of God, and have what overwhelms all their desire, to be blessed in His bliss, wise in His wisdom, good in His goodness, joyous in His joy, full of God, yet stretching forth to God; all thine which is God's, save His infinity, and that will be for thee too, for thou canst never reach the bounds of His perfections and His goodness.

E. B. PUSEY, *Selected Occasional Sermons*, p. 93.

REFERENCE: iv. 1, 2.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 129.

Chap. iv., vers. 1-13.

"TEMPTED like as we are."

The temptation, as is evident from the language employed, was in some way connected with the descent of the Holy Spirit upon our Lord; and we are thus taught that God, for their own and others' good, may lead His people through trial. It behoved Jesus to be made like unto His brethren, therefore He was led up into the wilderness; and while it had a bearing on them, it was no less an advantage to Him, for it furnished Him at the outset of His public ministry with a kind of intensified specimen of the difficulties that lay before Him.

I. The tempter makes an appeal to appetite. It is here that temptation first and most strongly besets a youth. From the mysterious connection between the body and the soul, there are certain appetites created within us which, in themselves considered, are not sinful—on the contrary, they are implanted there for useful, nay, for God-glorifying purposes; but Satan comes, and will persuade the young to gratify them in a sinful manner. That you may know how to resist such assaults, see

here how Jesus bore Himself when Satan besought Him to gratify His hunger in a forbidden way; He said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." That is to say, life does not consist in eating and drinking and enjoyment; life is not the gratification of the body in any shape, but the obedience of the soul to God.

II. The second appeal was made to ambition; and the same insidious temptation is, in one form or other, repeated in the case of every man; and for the most part in the commencement of his career he has to fight the battle, or to yield himself a captive. God's way to honour and power and wealth is still steep and arduous and rugged; and the lesson we must learn is to avoid the devil's short cuts, and to make the words of our Lord the motto of our lives: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve."

III. The last onset on our Lord made an appeal to His faith; and it too was as insidious as the rest. Jesus had already repelled him by expressing His confidence in God and allegiance to His Father, and to that very principle the tempter addresses himself now; as if he had said, "Dost thou trust God? Come and I will place Thee in circumstances such as will make manifest to all His guardian care of Thee." Jesus answered, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." We are not warranted to place ourselves in circumstances such as shall tempt the Lord. If we are in danger in God's service, we may rely that He will be with us. But we have no right to imagine that He will suspend the law of gravitation, whenever we choose to leap over a precipice; or that He will suspend the spiritual laws which regulate the actions of our souls, whenever we put ourselves into the way of temptation.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Life Truths*, p. 147.

REFERENCES: iv. 1-13.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 58; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 321. iv. 1-15.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., 355; J. J. Murphy, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 312. iv. 1-33.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 49. iv. 3.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 1.

Chap. iv., ver. 4.—**"It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God."**

CHRISTIAN Fasting.

I. There is a kind of fasting which can be nothing but good for us to practise. Self-denial relates to something which belongs to ourselves, but yet is not our highest property; and

this especially applies to our pleasure in bodily enjoyments. This pleasure is really natural, but it does not belong to our highest nature, and it is apt to overgrow that higher nature if not restrained. This restraining it is, then, the exact business of what we call self-denial. Now it is the manifest effect of self-denial thus understood to increase the pleasures of the higher part of our nature. We know that along with restraint of one kind of pleasure there comes the enjoyment of a pleasure of another sort—the pleasure of feeling that, so far as that one action goes, Christ approves of us; that we are so far the children of God, and at peace with God. I speak of this pleasure quite confidently, as of a thing which all understand, and feel to be more delightful than any other. He who never denies himself, never allows himself to feel it; he knows not what it is, and does not believe in its delightfulness.

II. Only observe that this highest pleasure only comes when we deny ourselves really on right motives. If anyone denies himself any indulgence for the sake of gaining credit for it from men, there cannot be in him that delightful sense of being approved of by God, and having so far followed Christ; because he knows that God does not approve such a motive, nor is he following Christ when acting upon it. So it was said in the Epistle of this day, that a man might give all his goods to feed the poor, and yet be without charity. He could not give away so largely without in some sense denying himself; he must cut off some of his pleasures by doing it; but if he does it for the sake of gaining credit for his liberality, he cannot gain that highest pleasure of which I have spoken—the pleasure of having pleased God, and therefore being loved by Him.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 90.

THE Art of Conversation.

Could man be happy without speech, living like the animals in a kind of innocence, but deprived of any higher thought, or communion with his fellows? There have been philosophers who wanted to bring him back to a state of nature, who would deprive him of all philosophy and of all religion, who would have him give up the hardly won inheritance of ages in the hope that he might be without evil and without good. Such prophets of evil should begin, if this were possible, by taking from him language. Human speech is a Divine gift; the more we consider it the more wonderful and mysterious does it appear. We must not lose or impair this glorious inheritance

Consider what is needed to give conversation its true and nobler character.

I. First there is kindness. He is twice blessed who says a pleasing or a soothing word to the aged or stupid, to those who are troubled by some false shame, or who from inexperience feel themselves at a loss in society; for kindness has a wonderful power of transmuting and converting human beings, and if a man, instead of always in thought coming round to himself, were always getting away from himself, he would attain to great freedom and enjoyment of society.

II. A second element in a happy and healthy state of society is sincerity, and mutual confidence which is given by it. We want to be able to trust the society in which we habitually live. In speaking of persons we should be on our guard against many faults which easily beset us; against petty jealousy, or popular envy of the great which hears, not altogether displeased, of something to their disadvantage. "I said I will take heed unto my ways, that I offend not with my tongue."

III. A third element may be described as an elevation above the lower interests of life. How is this higher tone to be attained? No definite answer can be given to this question, for superiority of manners must, for the most part, spring from superiority of character. Yet a few illustrations may realise to us what is meant? Why has one man weight and authority, and another not? Why does a single person so often exert such a spell or charm over a whole company? These are questions which it is instructive to ask, and everyone must answer them for himself, and in the answer to them he may perhaps find an antidote to his own weakness, or vanity, or unreality, or self-consciousness.

B. JOWETT, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 376.

REFERENCES: iv. 4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 337; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 61. iv. 5.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 23. iv. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,132. iv. 5-8.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 72; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 16. iv. 6.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 243.

Chap. iv., ver. 7.—"If Thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be Thine."

I. WHEN Jesus was offered the kingdoms of the world in return for an almost trivial act of homage, in His mind the proposal would assume the aspect of an expedient for advancing His kingdom, with the policies and prudences and compromises of

this world; an expedient which must have been as fatal to the kingdom of the Gospel as any monstrous coalition between good and evil, between life and death. For surely we must look for something more considerable, as lying behind, and signified by that momentary act of homage to which the Saviour was invited; we can hardly contemplate a ceremonial and bodily prostration as being the first and last of what was proposed. By falling down and worshipping the spirit of the world I understand, lowering the ideal of Christ's intended kingdom, and enlisting in its favour, and employing as agents in its extension and maintenance, the passions, the appetencies, and ambitions which might without harshness or ambition be included in the word "worldly-mindedness."

II. Our Lord does not hesitate in His answer. He replies, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Thou shalt make Him no more co-ordinate than subordinate with any other object of worship. The Gospel of grace shall either triumph in all its purity over the sin that is in the world, or in all its purity it shall retire from the conflict, and regain its native heaven. It shall contract no contamination from an alliance with sin, or by a coalition with anything that deserves the name of worldliness. Might we but in every temptation to compromise the interests of truth and love, those two pillars on which leans the temple of Christ within the heart of man, remember that any arrangement, any compromise, any friendly understanding between the spiritual and the anti-spiritual is a dishonour to the Spirit. It is letting an enemy with many comrades into the fortress in the disguise and under the pretext of friendship, who will not be long before he does the work of a traitor upon the garrison who have been so disloyal to their King as to invite his alliance.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 262.

Chap. iv., ver. 9.—**"And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple, and said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down from hence."**

I. THE spirit of temptation here presents himself in the character and with the accents and demeanour of an ally who desires nothing so ardently as the establishment of Messiah's kingdom in its integrity, and is ready with a proposal to accelerate, nay, precipitate its inauguration, and to insure its unanimous reception by mankind. Here at Jerusalem let the Son of Man perform a wonder that shall at once compel the homage of

mankind from the topmost pinnacle of the Temple, which from the loftiest escarpment of the city climbs sheer up into the sky; let Him launch Himself into the air, let Him plunge down to the very bottom of the abyss of the ravine of Jehoshaphat. Then let him alight unharmed. Would not this be a suitable, a proportionate, an appropriate, an effective inauguration of the kingdom of Christ upon earth? We ask

II. Was the Saviour's mission of such a kind that an abrupt act of conspicuousness and of power would be likely to promote it? Is it conceivable, in short, that there was the smallest taint of ambition in the project of the Saviour? If so, then the expedient suggested by the evil one might have had some affinity with such a purpose. But if his purpose were something at the farthest possible distance from all this; if it were to give a new commandment to mankind, namely, that they should love one another; if his purpose were one which required a far longer time for its disclosure and development than the exhibition of a prodigy, it was indispensable that he should drain the cup of affliction to the dregs, and so step by step ascend to the culmination of suffering upon the Cross; and then, and not till then, and by this gate of tribulation, but by none easier and none other, enter finally into an exceeding glory. This was the prodigy, this was the portent, this was the self-manifestation that Messiah was predestined to achieve before the sons of men. The Saviour is come to gain mankind, not by His power but by His love. He is come, not to claim the surrender of conscience and intelligence, not to substitute arbitrary rule for inward convictions of duty. To have exposed the Gospel to such influences at its outset would have been, as Satan knew, to ensure its extinction; it would have been asking tyranny to be the nurse of freedom; it would have been inviting falsehood to be the guardian of truth; it would have been hiring death to rock the cradle of intellectual and spiritual life.

W. H. BROOKFIELD, *Sermons*, p. 275.

REFERENCES: iv. 9-12.—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 32. iv. 14,15.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 67. iv. 14-17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 73. iv. 14-32.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 430. iv. 16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 401; E. Paxton Hood, *Preacher's Lantern*, vol. iii., p. 720; J. Martineau, *Hours of Thought*, vol. ii., p. 1; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 60. iv. 16-31.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 122. iv. 16-32.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 131. iv. 17, 18.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 19. iv. 17-21.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 338.

Chap. iv., ver. 18.—"To preach deliverance to the captives."

I. THESE words describe the part of our Lord's work which was not to be confined to His own personal agency; and this invites us to consider that other parts of His work were to be confined to His own personal agency. This is so; the work of a perfect righteousness wrought by man in absolute conformity to all the requirements of the law of God, and justifying righteousness which can stand the scrutiny of the Divine judgment—this was His work, and His alone. We never find Him telling His followers to go and offer a sacrifice for sin; but we do find Him telling them to go and preach the glad tidings. The preparation was His, and His alone; the proclamation was His, but not His alone. We cannot work deliverance; we can but preach it. He wrought it, finished it, and left it for us to preach. It is a daring invasion of His office to presume to add to the preparation; and it is disobedience to His orders not to proclaim what He has prepared.

II. "Captives." This captivity commenced in the fountain of the human family before any stream had flowed forth from it. The first man, before he had any offspring, had become the slave and captive to sin; he had incurred the consequences, the fatal consequences, of slavery. The great slave-holder is Satan, the enemy of God and man. He uses the world and the flesh, and see how he drags the captives through the mire. And in proportion as a man's conscience is awakened, and his sin known to be unpardoned, he is a slave.

III. Where is deliverance? This is our glorious message; Jesus Christ alone has deliverance. And mark how it is applied. Captivity began by the violation of the law of God, which is sin. He that committeth sin becomes a slave. The deliverance commences by obedience to the law of God. A man disobeyed, and all men fell. God Himself must obey, or no man can rise again. Deliverance commences thus in perfect obedience by a man to the law of the living God. Now, this is just what our blessed Redeemer and Saviour did. As man, He perfectly obeyed the law of God. There is a righteousness, a perfect righteousness, wrought by Him that can stand the scrutiny of the judgment of Almighty God. That is the beginning of deliverance. The captivity had become fatal by reason of the penalty incurred by disobedience; there was a curse, and the deliverance must therefore proceed by the removal of the curse. The curse must be inflicted, for God is true; the penalty must be endured, for the truth of God

endureth for ever. Here, again, Jesus Christ is the Deliverer. He took it upon Himself. This is the deliverance we have to preach. Preached, it is the testimony of God's love to the world; believed, it is the renewal of every man that receives it; disbelieved, it is a witness against the man that he rejects the counsel of God.

H. McNeile, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 290.

Chap. iv., vers. 18, 19.—**"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor," etc.**

Missionary Work.

I. If missionary enterprise were nothing more than one of the most remarkable characteristics of our time, it would well deserve a place in the thoughts of those who are brought up to become English citizens. Missionary work is becoming more and more a *national* undertaking, the expression of a deep national conviction. Any man, whether he be a statesman, a clergyman, or a layman, who shuts his eyes to this truth, is so far out of sympathy with the English nation, and suffers from that narrowness and isolation of heart which is sure to come upon those who look with contempt on national instincts. But missionary enterprise is something more than a marked phenomenon characteristic of our times. It is no transient phase, which may for a time interest philosophical minds, and then pass into obscurity, to be pierced only by the researches of future antiquarians. It is in its nature a lasting thing. If it pass away from England, it is not too much to say that the life of England will have departed.

II. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me." The missionary and the missionary society must be able to say this from the heart. There is great danger of forgetting this. This is an age of elaborate organisation, an age of societies. Beyond all question there is a most real danger that the great English religious societies may cover much that is hollow. The very fact that religious enterprises have become an established part of national enterprise is a reason for making us fear that the Spirit of God may be forgotten in the presence of the Spirit of the world. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is (1) liberty, (2) perfect integrity. Wherever the wants of Christ's children are to be supplied, wherever there are captives needing deliverance, poor asking for tidings of their Father, broken-hearted to be healed, blind praying for, or at least needing, recovery so sight, there is needed one who may well feel that he if a

labourer working at an infinite harvest, a shepherd feeding but too, scantily a countless flock of sheep and of lambs; and there, too is needed the mature counsel, the encouragement, and the warning of one who is but little disposed to be a lord over God's heritage, and is willingly and affectionately accepted as a true Father in God.

H. M. BUTLER, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 38.

CHRIST the Emancipator.

I. All the world has been under one consciousness—namely, of limitation of power, either inherent in the individual, or caused by the restrictions of circumstances, or by oppression from without; and to be free has been the aspiration of the world. When the Saviour declared that His mission in this world was to open prison bonds, to set captives at liberty, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord, He announced a doctrine with which the hearts of men were universally in sympathy. That was just what they wanted. Mankind want the restrictions and limitations about them to be destroyed.

II. The very first essay that the Saviour makes toward the enlargement of men's liberty wears the appearance of the opposite. The very first blow which He strikes at tyranny is at the tyranny of sense and sensuousness in the individual. He introduces us to God as a Father; and if we go to the Father through Him, and if He is a living and loving presence to us, we, by being taught to be in sympathy with Jesus Christ, are under the same conduct, and under the same general instructive processes which we see employed in the lower sphere, and in a more limited way in our own households. We are brought to a sense of the beauty, the grace, the sweetness, the power of the superior life in the soul over all the elements and influences of the lower life.

III. But the deliverance from the thrall of appetite and from the infirmities of the flesh is only one single element of emancipation. Christ delivers us from our bondage to secular conditions. The light and the life that we receive by faith tend to make, often do make, might always make, a man superior to his circumstances. That this is true is pre-eminently shown, not so much by those who are most obvious in life, as by the poor, to whom the Saviour said He came to preach this Gospel. It is the peculiarity of the philosophy of antiquity that it came to the few who were enlightened, and left in the dark the great under-class; and it was the peculiarity of the Gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ that it was designed to reach the great underclass. It is in hidden retreats and in secluded places that you see that disposition of Christ which makes men in the midst of all limitations and under adverse circumstances strong, steadfast, doing what the air-plants do, that, having no root in the soil, draw all their nutriment from the great air above them.

IV. The illumination that we derive from the Lord Jesus Christ is one that sets us free from ignorance, and in setting us free from ignorance it shuts the door out of which come the emissaries of mischief. Knowledge dominates ignorance, and all through society the strong tend to control the weak. But it is not merely the want of intellectual knowledge that makes a man weak; it is the want of that knowledge which comes by illumination through the Lord Jesus Christ.

H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 313.

The Preaching of the Gospel.

The words of the text are descriptive of the offices of Christ. We shall place them before you in the strongest light if we employ the method of contrast; that is, if we examine other systems, such as the law and natural religion, showing what these can do towards healing the broken-hearted and delivering the captive.

I. The ceremonial law was but a system of rites which had no natural efficacy, or of observances which were themselves destitute of virtue. If there were truth in the ceremonial law, it was, as we know, truth derived exclusively from Christ. Moses cannot be said to have come to preach deliverance to the captives, nor the setting at liberty them that are bruised. Our text will not hold good of the legal dispensation. But let us ask whether it is in any way verified by natural religion.

II. There are many men who think that there is a sort of natural efficacy in repentance, so that sorrow for sin must ensure its pardon. But is it thus in human affairs? Does pardon follow at all necessarily upon repentance? When laws have been broken, whoever dreams of the criminal being forgiven just because he is contrite? Living, as we confessedly do, in our moral capacity, under a retributive government, we can surely have no right to suppose that what would be utterly ineffectual, had we broken the laws of man, must be necessarily efficacious when set against the infraction of the laws of God.

III. Consider how the disclosures in the Gospel provide for the deliverance of the captive and the recovering of sight to the

blind. Bound by the prison-house of our selfish dispositions, bruised by our fall from original righteousness, we have but to believe in Christ, and close with Him as our Saviour, and lo! the fetters fall from us, and we spring into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Gospel admits to liberty, but that liberty God's service, which alone is freedom; it gives spiritual eyesight, but fixes the eyes on "whatsoever things are pure and lovely and of good report."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,483.

THE Christ as a Preacher.

I. Consider the substance of Christ's preaching. Without doubt we have in the text the keynote to His entire teaching. The peculiar feature of this quotation from Isaiah, which Christ makes His own, is its doubleness. "The poor"—but men are poor in condition and in spirit. "The captives"—but men may be in bondage under masters or circumstances, and also under their own sin. "The blind"—but men may be blind of eye, and also in spiritual vision. "The bruised"—but men are bruised in the struggles of this rough world, and also by the havoc of their own evil passions. Which did Christ mean? Both, but chiefly the moral, for He always struck through the external forms of evil to the moral root from which it springs, and of whose condition it is the general exponent. Christ sets Himself as the Deliverer from each, the origin and the result, the sin and the root, and the misery which is its fruitage.

II. The philosophy of this preaching. It was a revelation of God. Those words in the Nazareth synagogue were but the idlest breath, except as they brought the delivering God before men. But when God is seen and known the whole nature of man leaps into joyful and harmonious activity. Under this revelation of Him our troubles shrink, our broken hearts are healed, our darkened minds are illuminated, our sins pass away in tears of shame and repentance, and our whole being springs up to meet Him who made us, and made us for Himself; the secret of existence is revealed, the end of destiny is achieved.

III. The remaining point is the power of this preaching. No one truth, unless it happens to be an all-embracing truth, and no number of truths, however clearly seen, have any inspiring or redeeming power until they are grounded in an eternal person. Mozley, in one of his sermons, asks, "Have we not, in our moral nature, a great deal to do with fragments?" Yes, and it is the weakness of human nature, when it under-

takes to teach moral truth, that it has only fragments to deal with. It is because Christ did not see truth in a fragmentary way, and because there was in Himself nothing fragmentary, that He teaches with power. There is no capability in man of resisting perfect truth; when it is seen it conquers. The main thing, therefore, is to see; but men love darkness, and even when they begin to see it is in a half-blind way.

T. T. MUNGER, *The Freedom of Faith*, p. 151.

REFERENCES: iv. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 164; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 330; *Expositor*, 3rd series, vol. iii. p. 147; H. P. Liddon, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 293; *Homilist*, new series, vol. i., p. 136. iv. 18, 19.—J. P. Chown. *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 49; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 196; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 212.

Chap. iv., vers. 19-21.—**"To preach the acceptable year of the Lord," etc.**

JESUS read the prophets' testimony regarding God's goodness, and then closed the book, hiding the severity under the parchment folds. He preached on one half of a clause; did He intend to conceal the harsher portion of prophecy—to cover with a veil the frowns that gather on the Father's countenance, and permit only the smiles to shine through on men? No. He came not to destroy or mutilate the Law or the Prophets, but to fulfil. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one jot or tittle of the word, till all be fulfilled. Let us try to find out why the omission was made, and what the omission means.

I. It is clear that Isaiah saw the justice as well as the mercy of God, and bare witness impartially of both. He stood afar off, and with an eye divinely opened for the purpose, looked down the avenue of the future, as one might stand upon a mountain far inland and look along a straight narrow estuary to the distant sea, dimly visible on the farthest horizon. At the extremity of the vista, and distant so far in time that to him they seemed to lie within eternity, he descried two lights, one behind the other, and both approaching. The foremost was Divine mercy, and the one behind it was Divine wrath. The faithful witness faithfully proclaimed from his watch-tower to his countrymen both facts—mercy and vengeance.

II. When that witness had served his generation, and fallen asleep, others were successively placed on the same watch-tower to re-duplicate the same warning from age to age. Last of all

came Christ, in the fulness of the time. But now the foremost of the two lights had come up. It was abreast of the watchman. Turning to look full upon the one that had come, he sees not the one that is coming. In the lips of Jesus the testimony is not a prediction of what shall be, but a proclamation of what is. The mission of Christ was not to point to another, but to attract to Himself. He meant to present Himself to the people as the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, and therefore He could not include the day of vengeance; for on that day that part of the prophecy was not fulfilled. He came not to condemn the world, but to save; while He sat in the synagogue, and their eyes beheld Him, the day of vengeance had not come to them.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 260.

Chap. iv., ver. 22.—"And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

CHRIST'S words of love the reproof of detraction.

St. James is amazed at it, as against nature and one of the deepest aggravations of the sinfulness of sinful speaking, that the tongue, which was made to bless God, a harp to make sweet melody to Him, should also utter evil against God's image—man. Nature is true to itself; man alone is untrue. The fountain sends forth one and the same stream, sweet or bitter. Man's tongue alone would fain send forth both—sweet praises and blessings to God, bitter and hard and unloving thoughts of men.

I. Evil speaking, which God condemns, involves much besides. There is malice in all evil-speaking; yet it is not only to speak with conscious malice. There is falsehood in most evil-speaking; yet it is not at all to speak with conscious falsehood. Pride, envy, swell it up, waft it on, spread it from mouth to mouth; these aggravate its guilt, but its guilt is not in them. It has its own guilt without them. Its guilt is, that in every form and shape and degree it is a sin against love; and a sin against love is a sin against that which Almighty God, in His very nature, is and loves. Evil speaking springs from a deep, hidden fountain of unlove, gushing forth from the corruption of the human heart.

II. In the day of judgment evil, censorious, unloving words will be of far different account than even good men think here. Other wrong deeds, at most, hurt others' souls only by evil example. Most other sins have something seemingly revolting in them. He who speaks an evil word may, in one word, as

far as in him lies, slay countless souls. He sets rolling that which he cannot stop. You would count him a murderer who from a height let loose the fragment of a rock which should bound on and on, and fall among a multitude, although he knew not whom it would crush. Yet, even thus, the evil word let loose may slay love in the hearts of all who hear it, and on and on in all whom it reaches, and in whose hearts it finds consent.

III. The guilt of evil words is not with those only who speak them. Whoso listens to evil is an accomplice in it. Human law adjudges that the receiver is as guilty as the thief. If there were few receivers there would be few thieves. Evil-speaking has an evil conscience, which awakens as soon as it finds no response. "The ready hearer of detraction," says a father, "is the steel to the flint." Without him it is not drawn out. Since that is true, "Of every idle word thou shalt give account in the day of judgment," how much more of biting, unjust, detracting, unloving, untrue words, which most detracting words are!

E. B. PUSEY, *Parochial and Cathedral Sermons*, p. 215.

REFERENCE: iv. 23.—L. D. Bevan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 389.

Chap. iv., ver. 26 (with 1 Kings xvii., ver. 9).—"But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow."

I. FAITH precedes blessing. There are no blessed rays till we believe, till we have acted on our faith, and found the answer in the Father's eternal love. I think the woman did not regret the day she met the strange man on the borders of the wilderness. In the land of idolatry there was trouble; on the borders of famishing and doubt there was a constant supply. Mysteriously the meal held out, and the cruse of oil did not run dry. Thus they continued together, two blessed strangers. God sends His servant not to a palace, but to a widow's cottage, from the solitude of the wilderness, there to learn the humanities of society; from the cry of famine to rely on God, and there to learn the lessons of faith.

II. All great faith precedes great trial. One day, how hoarsely moaned the sea; the waves came murmuring wildly, and dashing on the rocks of Sarepta. The child was dead, and the sun looked down mistily on a distracted mother—distracted indeed, for she impeaches falsely her very blessings. "O thou man of God, art thou come to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?" If I had not entertained him, he had not

died. But Elijah was faithless, too. How wildly he, who ought to have known better, calls upon God. Then comes the restoration and the confession. "By this I know that thou art a man of God." Ah, how many proofs are necessary! If her son had continued dead her faith had been buried in his grave. But God helps our infirmities, and condescends to our fears, that He may work out our salvation. And in this He no doubt preached to the prophet not less than the prophet preached to the woman.

E. PAXTON HOOD, *Sermons*, p. 343.

REFERENCES: iv. 27.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 129. iv. 28, 29.—W. Wilkinson, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 53. iv. 28-30.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 753. iv. 33-44.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 62. iv. 39.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1,071. iv. 40.—*New Outlines on the New Testament*, p. 44. iv. 42-4.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 127.

Chap. v., vers. 1-11.

FISHERS of Men.

I. This passage reminds us that discipleship comes before apostleship. Peter had been, for at least some months, a docile learner in the school of Christ before he was called here to forsake all, and follow Him as an Apostle. They who would teach others about the Lord must first be acquainted with Him themselves.

II. That the knowledge of self, obtained through the discovery of Christ, is one of the main elements of power in seeking to benefit others. It is not a little remarkable that when God has called some of His greatest servants to signal service He has begun by giving them a thorough revelation of themselves, through the unveiling to them of Himself. Thus, when He appeared to Moses at the bush, the first effect was that Moses trembled and durst not behold, and the ultimate issue was that he cried, "O my Lord, I am not eloquent: . . . but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue." Peter recognised the deity of Jesus through the miracle; but the light of that Godhead did, at the same time, flash into his own heart, and reveal him unto himself as he had never had himself revealed unto him before. Then came the Master's "Fear not," with its soothing influence; and thus, through his discovery of himself, and his knowledge of his Lord, he was prepared for his apostolic service.

III. That the work of the Christian ministry demands the concentration of the whole man upon it. These first Apostles

"forsook all, and followed Christ." This was their response to the call to active and official service by the Lord. Their ordination came later, but their acceptance of the call was now, and was signalised by their withdrawal from their ordinary pursuits.

IV. That the higher life of the ministry lifts into itself, and utilises all the experiences of the lower life that preceded it. "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." This phrase tells us (1) that if we would catch men we must use the right kind of net; (2) that we must follow men to their haunts if we would win them for Christ; (3) that we ought to improve special seasons of opportunity.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Peter the Apostle*, p. 36.

REFERENCES: v. 1-11.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 11; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 154; W. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 88; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 33; vol. v., p. 193; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 350; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 342. v. 4—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 287; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 443; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. ii., p. 51: Talmage, *Old Wells Dug Out*, p. 323. v. 4-6.—S. Leathes, *Truth and Life*, p. 147; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 422. v. 4-11.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 560.

Chap. v., ver. 5.—"Nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net."

I. THE great multitude of fishes was the reward of the disciples' ready and willing obedience. It was the justification of their unshaken confidence in Jesus; none ever relied on Him and was deceived. It was their remuneration for placing their time and their boat at Christ's disposal, to do with them what seemed good in His sight. It would convince them that no one should ever work in God's service, and be a loser for doing so. Above all, it was to be an encouragement to Simon and his partners to enter with all their heart upon the ministry of the word with which they were now to be entrusted. That would involve them in work very toilsome, and often thankless; but undertaken at the command of Christ, and with His never-failing help and countenance, it could not be in vain.

II. The text bids us persevere in the path of duty, whatever may be its discouragements. It tells us after failure to try again in the Name of the Lord, seeking His aid, committing ourselves to Him. It seems to say, "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not." The lesson is a hard one to learn, but it has been learned and that

effectually. To hope against hope, to struggle in the face of failure, is no easy task for flesh and blood. But many have so struggled, and have eventually brought the whole to good effect. Any one who is really anxious to do good, or to correct what is amiss in his own immediate sphere, may derive encouragement from this passage of Scripture. It seems to say, "Do not be daunted by apparent failure. Persevere, and all shall come right in the end." Act like the obedient and confiding fisherman, "At Thy word I will let down the net." "Be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; knowing that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

J. EDMUND, *Sixty Sermons*, p. 285.

Chap. v., vers. 5, 6.

OBEDIENCE to the word of Christ, and the success with which it is crowned.

I. Obedience to the word of Christ—"Nevertheless at Thy word." It is wise to have authority for every work we undertake. To know that we have authority, and a sufficient one, is more than half the inspiration of our life. It is enough for the soldier that he has the authority of his officer, for the officer that he has the authority of his general, for the ambassador that he has the authority of his king; and for the Christian labourer it is enough that he has the authority of Christ. Nothing short of this authority would either inspire or justify us in pursuing the work to which we have set our hands. Be sure of this, that Peter would have turned a deaf ear to any other voice than that of Christ if it had enjoined a like command. But he is willing to try at Christ's word. "Nevertheless," said Peter, that is, not because of success, but in spite of failure, "at Thy word I will let down the net." And still the word "nevertheless" is on the lips of the Church. The night had been discouraging, and the Church has its discouragements, too; but nevertheless it has to do the work given it to do by the word of Christ.

II. Look at the result of this obedience. It had in it not much of cheerfulness, nor, perhaps, any faith, but it was obedience under trying circumstances, and as such it was crowned with success. The failure of the previous night was not unforeseen or unarranged. Christ was in that failure as much as in the success that followed it. He saw those fishermen at their work in that long, profitless night, and He meant they should bring

back empty nets. It was part of His gracious purpose to teach them that without Him they could do nothing, and that with Him they could do all things. Empty nets without His blessing, and full nets with it. And this lesson they were to remember henceforth when they should become fishers of men. The night of failure was not without its lesson and its benefit. We can do worse than fail—we can succeed, and be proud of our success; we can succeed, and burn incense to our net; we can succeed, and despise those who fail; we can succeed, and forget the Hand whose it is to give or to withhold, to kill or to make alive. He is but a weak and worthless man who can only labour so long as he succeeds, fight as long as he conquers, run as long as he wins the race. Such a fair-weather soul is not fit for any kingdom, least of all for the kingdom of God.

E. MELLOR, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 272.

REFERENCES: v. 5.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 10th series, p. 117, Spurgeon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,654; J. Menzies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 271; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 213; vol. viii., p. 267; C. J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 225. v. 5, 6.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 149.

Chap. v., ver. 6.—"A great multitude of fishes."

WHAT was the teaching of this miracle for the Apostles and for us?

I. To Peter, indeed, and his fellows it was the Divine assurance that henceforth their life was to be spent for Him alone. No more fishing on the Lake of Galilee; henceforth they must toil night and day to save souls alive. The miracle was their warranty that, so only they abide within the ship of God's holy Church, so only they have Christ with them all days, directing and protecting; however futile, humanly speaking, their work may be, it cannot fail. Christ the Source and Centre of the Church's life on earth, in heaven; for time, for eternity; Christ using human instruments to draw souls out of the waters of this troublesome world, and bring them safe to the eternal shore; this surely was the meaning of the miracle for Peter and for us.

II. Yet, further, it tells me that whatsoever I take in hand, if I fail to bid Jesus Christ be my Friend, must end in loss. All success in life, success in home, success in business, success in scientific pursuits, depends on Jesus Christ's help. "Without Me ye can do nothing." Men may think to dispense with

Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God; but their efforts are doomed to failure. How shall I then secure this presence? By making everything in life a matter of prayer. Referring *all* to Him; not merely things appertaining to my soul's needs, but my daily business, my home life, my recreation, my pleasures. So does our daily life become supernatural, Divine; the light of God's countenance shines full upon us; our lives are simple, natural, bright, lovely, all because they are lives of faith in God; they are lived in God, referred to Him in every detail; they have Him for their end; failure is impossible.

III. Yet more. Did not this miracle teach St. Peter a salutary lesson of Divine Omnipotence? The eye of Jesus Christ could reach the depths of the Sea of Galilee; He knew exactly where and when the fish would be found. He who could read the secrets of the Sea of Galilee could also read the secrets of Peter's heart, read his selfishness, read his faithlessness, his impetuosity, and his cowardice. He knows us, yet He bids us know ourselves, that knowing ourselves, and bewailing our wasted life, He may say to us, Fear not.

T. BIRKETT DOVER, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 34.

REFERENCES: v. 6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 62; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 157. v. 7.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 65; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 150.

Chap. v., ver. 8.—**"When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."**

IT is easy to trace the way by which Peter's thoughts had travelled to this conclusion. The miracle—such a thing as had never been seen before on those familiar waters—had taken a wonderful hold upon the fisherman's mind. His veneration for the mighty Stranger who had done it at once rose to the highest. From the contemplation of the wonder-worker the eyes of his mind, as they are wont, turned, and in a moment turned in upon himself, and the contrast became intolerable. He was softened at the moment that he was convinced, and upon his melted heart's conscience he wrote the large, deep characters of sin.

I. The greatest and surest test of every man's state before God is this, "What is sin?" How does he feel to sin? In a child, I always notice, that quick perception of sin in little

things, and a keen distress at it, is the most certain index of early piety. And, as it is in childhood, so it is in the Christian's after-life, which is childhood over again; the measure of the saint is always the depth of his convictions.

II. Until the spiritual eye has been fully opened, the sense of the distance which there is, and which the natural mind feels there ought to be, between God and the sinner, is ever strong in thoughtful, serious, and really converted persons. In one this feeling becomes despair. The soul dares not to admit the thought that it could ever be received into the love of God. The dread of the sin of presumption—from which it is the farthest off—is ever haunting it. (2) In another man this feeling destroys all present sense of God's mercy. A real deprecation of sin, acting unscripturally, leads to a wrong perception of the entire spirit of the Gospel. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

III. It is an unspeakable comfort to know the awful prayer that Peter made in ignorance was never answered. Christ did not depart from him. Thank God, He knows when to refuse a prayer. He never leaves those who are only ignorant. On the contrary, Christ instantly gave Peter something more than forgiveness. He gave the employment to him which ensured his pardon: "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." Those who have ever feared lest they have lost the love of one whose love they most prized, will best understand the delicacy and the beauty of this way of treating a discouraged disciple.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 209.

CONSIDER what it was that could lead St. Peter to wish the Lord to go away and depart from him; what he could mean, and what he could be feeling, that should make him shrink from Christ, and actually, on his knees, beg Him to go away and leave him, at the very moment when He had shown so signal a proof of His Divine power and goodness.

I. St. Peter's words in the text were the natural exclamation of wonder; and with wonder a natural shrinking back from One so good, so holy, so powerful, and so Divine. I think Peter felt as though he said: "Thou art too good, too great for me to be near Thee. Let me be Thy disciple farther off. Do not come to me; I am not good enough for Thy near company. Depart from me. I shrink, in uneasiness and distress of mind, from Thy closer presence." I believe this to be the true account of St. Peter's meaning, and of the feeling with which he spoke;

and if it is so, it seems to me one which is very common. Men, conscious of sin, conscious of weakness, and not very much in earnest, do shrink from God in this sort of way. It is possible that their shrinking may seem to themselves like modesty and humility; but it is a shrinking away from God, and it may be extremely serious in its consequences. In its extremest form it is none other than the same thing which the poor creatures, possessed with devils in the country of the Gergesenes, cried out, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of God? Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time?"

II. But mark the difference in these two cases. In the one, a man shrinks altogether away from God, flies from Him, will not believe His love; is sure that he is quite hopelessly lost and ruined, falls into despair and that terrible recklessness of unclean living which is the characteristic of despair. And so he falls into complete and hopeless rebellion, and his end is utter loss and death. In the other case, a man, penetrated with the sense of his unworthiness and sin, also shrinks, or at least is tempted to shrink, away from God; he feels disposed to cry, with St. Peter, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." But he knows that he must not yield to such a temptation. He soon recalls and repents of his faithless cry. He learns by grace to trust his Saviour's love. He learns to repent of the yielding, such as it was, to the temptation of shrinking away. There may have been some likeness in the original feeling of the two, but the one has ended in despair, and the other in the high estate of a favoured apostle, one of the chief seats in the everlasting kingdom of glory.

G. MOBERLY, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 180.

REFERENCES: v. 8.—G. Calthrop, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 239; Bishop Lightfoot, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 177; J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 147; F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 125; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 9. v. 10. *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 54.

Chap. v., vers. 12, 13 (with Luke v., ver. 20).—**"And when He saw their faith, He said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee."**

I. So long as there is any religion at all in the world it will, of course, busy itself with the eternal question of the difference between right and wrong. It will, in some sense, make itself the champion of right and the enemy of wrong. But then wrongdoing may be very differently regarded, even by religious

men. Roughly speaking, it may be regarded as directed either against man or against God; either as an injury or an offence; either as a weakness or a wickedness; either as a defect or a sin. Roughly speaking, again, the world takes the former view, Scripture the latter. The sentence of worldly men and of the natural conscience is, "I have injured him, and I must do what I can to make amends." The sentence of Scripture is that of the Psalmist, "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

II. If at any time sin as sin is thought little of, the prevalent ideal of goodness among Christians will be that of doing good to man rather than walking humbly with God. Philanthropy, in short, will take the place of holiness. And I think we see many signs of this at the present day—signs which we are bound to hail with thankfulness, even while, as Christians, we note their deficiencies.

III. Christ assumes our sinfulness as the very basis of His work. He speaks to us as sinners, but as sinners loved, not despised; and there is all the difference. His deeds have an interest indeed, and a charm for thousands, and thousands who are, as yet at least, but little burdened by a sense of sin. But it was not to interest these that He lived and died. He came not to call the righteous, or the sensible, or the indifferent, or the critical, but *sinners to repentance*. That was His distinguishing work. All other works—the unfelt duties He has revealed, the dormant philosophy He has stimulated, the social kindness He has aroused, the august institutions He has founded and hallowed—all these works, glorious as they are, are but secondary to His great design. He is, first and chief, the Friend of sinners. "He shall save His people from their sins." He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied; by His knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities.

H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 252.

References: v. 12, 13.—M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 227. v. 12-26.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., pp. 124, 132; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 134. v. 13.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 324. v. 14-21.—*Ibid.*, p. 128. v. 15.—*Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 139.

Chap. v., ver. 16.—"And He withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed."

I. When we read in this and in so many other passages that our blessed Lord in the days of His flesh offered prayers unto

God, it greatly concerns us that we do not accept an explanation only too commonly suggested of these His prayers. It is sometimes said that Christ our Lord prayed by way of example, that so He might teach us the duty of prayer, and that His prayers had no other purpose and meaning but this. Doubtless He was our example in this as in every other point. But His prayers were no such hollow, unreal things, as we must needs confess them to have been, if such was the *only* intention which they had. Our Lord, the head of the race of men, but still man as truly as He was God, prayed, as any one of His servants might pray, because—in prayer is strength; in prayer is victory over temptation; in prayer, and in the grace of God obtained through prayer, is deliverance from all evil.

II. If times of prayer were needful for Christ, how much more for all others; for as He was in the world, so are we; the only difference being that we lie open to the injurious influences which it exerts, as He neither did nor could; that the evil in the world finds an echo and an answer in our hearts which it found not at all in His. In a world where there is so much to dissipate and distract the spirit, how needful for us is that communion with God, in which alone the spirit collects itself at its true centre, which is God again; in a world where there is so much to ruffle the spirit's plumes, how needful that entering into the secret of the pavilion, which will alone bring it back to composure and peace; in a world where there is so much to sadden and depress, how blessed that communion with Him, in whom is the one source and fountain of all true gladness and abiding joy; in a world where so much is ever seeking to unhallow our spirits, to render them common and profane, how high the privilege of consecrating them anew in prayer to holiness and to God.

R. C. TRENCH, *Sermons in Westminster Abbey*, p. 138.

REFERENCES: v. 16.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 205; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 128; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 229. v. 16-26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 981. v. 17.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., No. 720. v. 18-25.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 145. v. 22, 23.—N. Smyth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 72. v. 26.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 88.

Chap. v., ver. 27.—"And He said unto him, Follow Me."

THE text tells us of the power which Christ exercised over the mind, the will, and the affections. "Follow Me, follow Me,"

and immediately he rose up, and followed Him. There was power—power over the mind, power over the will, power over the affections ; and that is the demonstration beyond all parallel that Christ is God. Now, about this Levi. We know very little about him, except that he was a Jew, a native of Galilee, and that he was a publican—that is, a collector of the Roman taxes. Now for a Roman citizen to become a collector of the taxes upon the Jews was an offence to them, for it carried the conviction constantly to their minds that they were a subjugated people ; but that a Jew should be so far recreant to the honour of his country and to the feeling of his people as to take office under the Roman government for such a purpose, it carried the conviction home still further. How did Levi come to follow Christ ? There are four things that will help us to determine the reality of his conversion.

I. First, the change of occupation in obedience to Christ. The rule is to continue in that calling in which we were unless the providence of God, or some other reason, justifies the change. There are but two exceptions to this rule. The first is where the business in which a man is called, converted, is itself injurious to himself and his fellow-men. The other is where a man is called to a different field of labour.

II. The second evidence is the sacrifice endured. Levi sacrificed the source of his wealth. The publicans did get rich ; he forsook it, gave it up. You know it takes grace to do that.

III. The third evidence is his identifying himself with Christ. He did not act as Nicodemus did, who said, "I will come round the corner at night ;" nor like Joseph of Arimathæa, who was secretly a disciple. He was no neutral ; he came right out, identified himself with Jesus Christ, to go where He went, and suffer or rejoice as He suffered or rejoiced.

IV. I have one more evidence—his concern for his fellow-men. It is added, "He made a great feast in his own house, and there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them." Why did he make that feast ? Levi understood human nature ; he knew that more people would come to a feast than to a prayer meeting. He made a feast ; he called the publicans to it ; he designed to tell them why he had determined to quit that business. He made a public profession of religion. He had a hope that as he had experienced a saving benefit, so those others would also desire to share it with him. If any individual should bring in such evidences as

Levi's in proof of his conversion, I take it that he would be received into the Church.

J. PATTON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 120.

Chap. v., vers. 27, 28.—"And after these things He went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom, and He said unto him, Follow Me. And he left all, rose up, and followed Him."

How was it that a man like Levi, with aims so low and pleasures so earthly, was found to listen, not only with willingness, but with profit and attention, to the teachings of the Lord Jesus? We cannot explain that difficulty away by saying that our Saviour spoke seldom or leniently of this particular class of men; for it would be difficult to name any sin, save hypocrisy, which He reproved with greater frequency and severity than covetousness. Anything more opposite than the tone of His preaching to the state of public teaching and practice it would be impossible to conceive, and yet the fact is incontestable, that in this class of publicans our Saviour found numerous disciples and one apostle. How, then, are we to explain it? The result was due, I believe,

I. To the honesty of the Lord Jesus Himself. In censuring sinners He reproved all alike, not only the poor and despised, but also the nominally pious and respectable. No station was so lofty as to lift the offender above the reach of His censure; no profession so pious or respectable as to cloak from his searching eye the pride, or lust, or covetousness, which might lurk concealed beneath it. By such a prophet the publicans could bear to be censured, who told the Pharisees that they were accursed outcasts, that their phylacteries and broad garments, and greetings in the market-place, were all hypocrisy. If, then, we are desiring that the love of Christ should touch men's hearts, and change their lives, let us endeavour to be more like our Saviour. More bold and true in what we say; more simple and self-denying in what we do; practising no more than what we believe and what we intend.

II. But then, in the second place, if we would worthily follow the Lord Jesus, our Master, we must not only imitate His truthfulness and self-denial, but we must be content, like Matthew, to leave all in order to do it; content, that is to say, with no more of this world's wealth and honour and pleasant things, than are consistent with a simple and holy-hearted surrender of our wills and ways to the will and direction of our blessed Saviour. If there be any pleasure, any pursuit,

any friend, any indulgence, any gain, which is inconsistent with the devotion of our life and work and heart to the service and glory of our Lord, all that must be given up without reservation; we must throw it off and cast it behind us, finally and decisively, as Matthew did, when, rising up from the toll-booth at the call of the Saviour, he deserted his occupation for ever. BISHOP MOORHOUSE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 536.

I. ONE of the most conspicuous instances of the attractive power of Jesus is presented by the narrative in our text. The Lord laid a spell on Matthew, and he yielded in a moment. Christ drew him irresistibly, imperially. He swept him with Him in His progress as a satellite is swept by its sun. And what was the secret of the spell? The Man Christ Jesus embodied all the higher thoughts, influences, aspirations, and hopes, by which His life had ever been blessed. Man is double. He is what he is, what the world and the devil have made him, and he is what he was meant to be, what his soul pines to be—his idea. And he and his idea dwell together, strange comrades in this case of flesh. The one is and suffers; the other dreams, and while it dreams is blessed.

II. The Lord came by as Matthew was brooding there; the Lord comes by as you sit brooding; He is the Author and Finisher of those dreams. His is the voice which has often spoken to you in night watches, and stirred your aspirations; in bitter sorrow He has come to you and kindled your hope; out of the depths He has lifted you to visions of a glorious future, and made the germs of all blessed fruits stir in the cold breast of your despair. Every voice of the better nature, every pining of the nobler heart, every vision of the purer imagination, every stirring of the immortal spirit that you have from God, every sigh for deliverance from sin, every resolution to fight it out, God helping you, with the devil, is the Lord's inspiration; and they all rise up and beckon you to follow Him, when Jesus of Nazareth at length draws near. "And Matthew left all, rose up, and followed Him." Young man, standing there by the devil's toll-booth, paying in the tax of thy young life to his accursed treasury, go thou and do likewise.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 106.

REFERENCES: v. 27-9.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. vii., p. 141; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 190. v. 27-32.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 20. v. 27-39.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 154. v. 28.—G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 249.

Chap. v., ver. 29.—"And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them."

Our Lord's example teaches us what sort of employment is always, perhaps so far as we can pursue it, the most useful to our souls; it shows us, at any rate, what business there is which we can none of us safely neglect altogether; for that which Christ did *always*, Christ's servants cannot certainly be justified if they never do. And this business consists in mixing with others, not in the mere line of our trade or calling, and still less for mere purposes of gaiety; but the mixing with others, neither for business, nor yet for pleasure, but in the largest sense of the word, for *charity*.

I. It will, then, be seen how many persons there are who have need to be reminded of this duty. They who really live mostly to themselves are indeed in these days very few, and embrace only that small number of persons whose time is principally spent in study; that is, men who are devoted to literature or science. But those who, while they mix with others, yet do it in the line of their business, or for pleasure's sake, include a very large portion of the world indeed. Statesmen, lawyers, soldiers, sailors, tradesmen, merchants, farmers, labourers—all are necessarily brought much into contact with their fellow-men; there is no danger of their living in loneliness. And persons of no profession—the young, and women of all ages, in the richer classes especially—they desire society for the pleasure of it; they think it dull to live out of the world. For it is very possible that neither of these two large classes of people may mix with others in the way that Christ mixed with them; they may do it for business or for pleasure, but not for charity.

II. To those, then, who are not inclined to be idle, but who, whether from necessity or from activity of mind, are sure to have plenty of employment, nay, who are so much engrossed by it that it leaves them, as was the case with Christ, "no leisure so much as to eat," it becomes of great consequence, not only that they should be as busy as Christ was, but that part of their business, at least, should be of the same kind; not only that they should be fully employed, but that their employment may, in part at least, be of that sort, as, when they fail, they cause them to be received into everlasting habitations.

T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 164.

Reference: v. 31.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 95.

Chap. v., vers. 33-9.

CHRISTIAN Mutual Tolerance. Christ is here claiming for His disciples that their spiritual life be left to unfold itself naturally; that they be not fettered with forms; that they be not judged by religious traditions and old habits; that they be free to show themselves glad when they have cause of gladness, and that their expressions of sorrow and their self-discipline follow their feeling of sorrow and their need of discipline.

I. Christ's vindication of freedom to all His disciples. We cannot ante-date maturity nor hurry experience. Endeavour not to force a young and vigorous, even though incomplete, Christian character into the mould and habit of an older one, which may perchance, in its turn, be too despondent, too cheerless; but rather notice and admire how God develops each according to its own vitality, and appoints to each its proper sphere and mode of service. There is a work to be done by the young, and God has given them the impulses for it. Their native energy will be always breaking through their conventionalities; the new wine will burst the bottles. Put the new wine into new bottles, and both will be preserved.

II. Christ's plea for consideration of one another. Be patient, Christ is saying to those who were offended at the exuberance of His disciples; they will not always be as joyous as they are now. The realities of life and the variations of Christian experience will surely take away from younger disciples the undue exaltation which shocks the elder saints. Without your schooling they will pass through much tribulation. They will be sober enough, subdued enough, by-and-by. While the more sombre Christians attempt to bind their sadness as a law on the whole Church, there will surely be strife and bitterness, insincerity, unfitness for the stress of the Christian conflict. But the life which Christ develops in its own fitting forms will give the joyous, confident Christian, matured by painful discipline, sympathy even with those whose sadness is the sadness of doubt. He will be very gentle with them, for His own life has taught Him that without full and abiding confidence in Jesus religious experience must be a gloomy thing. The new wine is better than the old. Not only is Christianity better than Judaism; even under the Gospel the new days are better than the old. God gives His best blessings latest. "Thou hast kept the good wine till now."

A. MACKENNAL, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 218.

REFERENCES: v. 33.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and*

Other Sermons, p. 190. v. 33-9.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 69; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 106. v. 35.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 410. vi. 1-12. —*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 95; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 88; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 82. vi. 1-52 —E. Aston, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 327. vi. 6-11.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 166.

Chap. vi., ver. 10.—"He said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand. And he did so: and his hand was restored whole as the other."

NOTE—

I. That spiritual powerlessness, of which the withered hand is a just and appropriate symbol. (1) The organ was a hand—the organ of touch. (2) Not both this man's hands were withered, but the better and more serviceable of the two. Faith is the spiritual faculty, corresponding to the bodily faculty of touch. (3) It was the design of Nature that the man should use his hand, but disease had thwarted this design. So, in the Fall, the spirit of man sustained a wreck.

II. What Christ requires us to do in order to the removal of this infirmity. He demands exertion and energy on our parts before He will consent to put forth that healing power which alone can recover us from our soul's infirmity.

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 313.

REFERENCES: vi. 10.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 57. vi. 11-18.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iv., p. 627.

Chap. vi., ver. 12.—"And it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God."

SHORT devotions a hindrance to prayer.

I. Our Lord's nights of prayer were not simple exercises of His exceeding spiritual strength; they were also the earnest cleaving of man to God. And if the infirmities of a sinless being drew him so mightily to God, how much more ought the sin that is in us to drive us to the Divine Presence for healing and for strength! The contrast of our weakness with His perfection gives us no discharge from His example; rather, it adds a greater force. It brings out a further and deeper reason which makes the law of prayer to us the very condition of life. If we do not pray we perish. It is no answer to say we are weak and cannot continue in prayer as He. That very weakness is in itself the necessity which forces us to pray.

II. Again, it is said, "It is impossible for those who live an active and busy life to find time for long private devotions." From the tone in which some people speak one would think that our blessed Master had lived a leisurely and unimpeded life; that He had nothing else to do but to live alone in retirement and solitude, in contemplation and prayer; and this of One whose whole life was toil amid crowds and multitudes, hungry and wayworn, full of calls and interruptions. It were rather true to say that no man's life was ever yet so broken in upon, and taken from him by labour and care, and the importunity of others, as His; and yet He is to us the perfect Example of devotion. It was the toil of the day that turned His night into a vigil. Alas for the man that is too busy to pray! for he is too busy to be saved.

III. But once more. It may be said, "All this proves too much, for if it prove anything it proves that we ought to give up our natural rest and our night's sleep, and to break the common habits of a regular life in a way that health and sound discretion would equally forbid." Is it not true that people who would without a word, travel many nights together for business or amusement, would positively resent the notion of spending even a few hours of Christmas or Easter Eve in prayer and self-examination? However, it is enough for the present purpose to say that whosoever would live a life of prayer, must spend no small part of every day in praying.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 342.

WE are not told the exact time or the particular spot where this prayer was made. Of the spot, we know only that it was a mountain; it must have been a mountain near Capernaum. Twice we read of Jesus Christ going out into a wilderness or solitary place to pray, and twice into a mountain.

I. It is clear that the place was selected as helpful. He could not do what He has told us to do, for how could He, who never had a house, "go into His closet, and shut the door"? Therefore He made the mountain His closet, and the rocks shut the door about Him. And there was a grandeur and a fitness when the Incarnate Creator of this world found His secret place in the stillness of the fastnesses of nature. It may not be given to us ever to find the aid of these sublimities, but this is a good rule—Choose for prayer whatever most quiets and most raises the mind.

II. Of the time of Christ's prayer we only read that it was

"in those days," those Capernaum days. But whenever it was, it was on the eve of the election of the Twelve. The eves of all events are solemn calls to prayer. How many days would have been saved their bitter, bitter regrets, if there had been more praying yesterdays. Life is full of eves. All life is an eve. Few great events have no eve. And we cannot be too thankful to God for those hushes given us for probation. The secret of a happy life—the secret of eternity—is a well-spent eve.

III. Our blessed Lord did not always pray the livelong night. The manner in which the fact is mentioned here shows that it was quite exceptional, and He had the Spirit without measure. The general rule is, Pray according to the condition of your heart. Do not let the prayer strain the thoughts, but let the thoughts determine and regulate the prayer. Pray as you feel drawn in prayer, or, in other words, as the Spirit of God in you leads and dictates. The great thing is to have something really to say to God. Whatever you do, do not pray on for words' sake, or for length's sake. You honour God in prayer by saying and leaving, more than by saying and repeating. And be sure that you carry into prayer the principle which you are to carry into conversation, and never talk, either to man or to God Himself, above and beyond your real level.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 101.

REFERENCES: vi. 12.—W. H. Jellie, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 196; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol xiv., No. 798; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 289, vol. vi., p. 270; G. Salmon, *Sermons in Trinity College, Dublin*, p. 171. vi. 12, 13.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 129; Spurgeon *Evening by Evening*, p. 319. vi. 12-16.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 30. vi. 13.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 344; H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 129. vi. 13-16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 223; *Homilist*, 4th series, vol. i., p. 88. vi. 13-17.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 97. vi. 15.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 639. vi. 15, 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. xii., p. 43. vi. 17-49.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 41; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 110.

Chap. vi, ver. 19.—**"The whole multitude sought to touch Him: for there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all."**

OUTWARD pains and calamities are so many tokens and types of inward and spiritual evils, and Christ curing them by His touch gives us His own sure token of His will and power to cure all the diseases of our souls.

I. Blindness, for example—we perceive at once what evil condition of the heart that represents. "Every one that doeth

evil hateth the light," and shutteth his eyes against it, until at last he loses even the power of seeing. Such was the condition outwardly of the blind man, who sat and begged at the Temple gate, when Jesus passed by and made clay of the spittle, and anointed his eyes with the clay, and bade him wash in the pool of Siloam, and he went and washed and came seeing. In like manner, when heathens, blind and ignorant persons, are wandering in the darkness of this world, our blessed Redeemer applies Himself to their souls by ways which seem to the unbelieving mean and ordinary, as He made clay of the spittle, and anointed the man's eyes with the clay; and He sends them to the pool of Siloam, the laver of regeneration in baptism, and they receive inward sight, grace to see and to choose their duty.

II. So the sad helplessness, the inward palsy, of habitual and even deadly sin, is to be cured in one way, and in one way only. The man must be brought to Jesus Christ by the charitable prayers and help of kind friends, or Christ of His own mercy must come in His power where the man lies; and he not hindering the gracious work by unbelief, the Lord will say unto him, "Thy sins be forgiven thee: take up thy bed and walk." He will justify the sinner by His grace, begun in baptism or renewed in penitence, and the sinner forgiven will do the works of one in spiritual health.

III. As, then, oppressed, diseased persons in those days might know that our Lord was really come, by the healing which He bestowed on the bodies of the afflicted, so are we now to assure ourselves more and more that He is our only Saviour, our only way to happiness, by the help and comfort which He is sure to give us, if we draw nearer to Him continually in the keeping of His commandments. As faith was the condition of healing then, so is it the condition of grace now.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. viii., p. 262.

REFERENCE: vi. 20-49.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 161.

Chap. vi., ver. 26.—**"Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you!"**

THE Dangers of Praise.

I. It is more than probable that, if men speak well of you, their judgment of you is fallacious; you do not deserve it. "In the like manner did their fathers unto the false prophets." Men are fallible judges of one another's real character.

II. However fallacious the popular estimate, it has a direct tendency to carry us along with it. We naturally adopt other men's judgments, as upon other subjects, so also upon this, our own character.

III. And then follow certain practical consequences, all of them, in a Christian point of view, serious and even disastrous. (1) The first of these is the loss of humility. How can he, of whom all men men speak well, know what true humility is? He may, and he probably will, wear a mask over his pride, for that is a condition of being well spoken of; but the pride itself will be only hidden, not unmoved; and where pride is enthroned, there cannot be the mind meet for God's kingdom. (2) With the decay of humility comes the loss of watchfulness. If we are not conscious, and painfully conscious, of infirmity and of sinfulness, how can we watch? Why should we watch? (3) And with the loss of humility and the loss of watchfulness comes, as a natural consequence, the loss of strength. Praise is an essentially enfeebling and enervating thing. It relaxes the sinews of the mind as sultry weather those of the body. Praise promotes repose; self-satisfaction first, and as its natural result the intermission of effort. (4) Again, it is an effect of being well spoken of, to make a man covet that approbation, and at last live for it. It is a pleasant thing to be popular; human nature loves it, and finds it very hard either to sit loose to it when gained, or to do anything which may endanger it. (5) The praise of men has a direct tendency to attach us to earth, and make us forget heaven. To be a Christian is to have your heart in heaven, where Christ sitteth. What a distracting effect must the sound of earthly applause have upon one whose ear is attentively listening for the still small voice from heaven!

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Memorials of Harrow Sundays*, p. 175.

REFERENCES: vi. 26.—F. W. Aveling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 4. vi. 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 260; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 244; J. B. Walton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 43. vi. 32, 34.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,584.

Chap. vi., vers. 36-8.—**"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful," etc.**

THE Gospel Teaching.

I. "Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful." And how merciful God is! It is the attribute, the quality, by which He is distinguished. And that mercy of God is proposed for our imitation. Remember that mercy, pity, compassion, a readiness

to be appeased, a wish to take a more favourable view of our neighbours' faults, that this is the teaching of the Master—a teaching enforced by His own example.

II. "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged." Well did our Lord know what was in man when He gave us this commandment. For what is there so common as this very fault of judging and condemning our neighbour? We all are too apt to set up for judges; we all have our eyes too open to see the faults of our neighbour; and we all shut our eyes too close upon our own failings. Be sure that as followers of Jesus Christ, as men who look to Him for guidance as well as for salvation, we are bound to be especially careful, not hastily, not without the strongest cause, to take upon ourselves to be judges and condemners of our brethren.

III. "Give, and it shall be given unto you." There is the golden rule of God. As you deal by others, so shall you be dealt with by Him. Be kind, be liberal, be ready to make allowance, easy to be appeased, be ready to do good with what means you have, and by this same measure it shall be measured to you again in the day of necessity. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

R. D. B. RAWNSLEY, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 1.

I. "BE ye merciful." These words were spoken to an age in which mercy was poorly esteemed. Among the old Roman virtues mercy held an insignificant place. The gods themselves were unmerciful. Prometheus bound to his rock through centuries bore witness to the implacable resentment of Jews. The savage instinct by which the sick and feeble are left to perish by the wayside, while the strong hurry on unheeding, survived even among the comparatively tender-hearted Hebrews. There was a wounded traveller on many a high road, and priest and Levite preferred to let him perish. Hospitals, infirmaries, homes for the aged and the sick, were undreamed of by the most enlightened statesmanship of the age, the extraordinary efforts which men made to secure the survival of the fittest froze their hearts, and the fittest became themselves the most unworthy. It was the age, too, of slavery. No one can look into the ghastly history of Roman slavery without realising how much Christ's words have done for men. Every cross set up on the Appian way was the landmark of the decaying civilisation. How strangely such words as these must have sounded to the early Christians even after they were enlightened,

"Paul, the slave of Jesus Christ," "Peter a slave and an Apostle!"

II. We sometimes hear it said that our age is too merciful. The reason is, that some who use words loosely confuse mercy with lack of moral fibre. We must be so merciful, that we be not too remiss. The mercy of God has nothing inconsistent with the sternest justice. Mercy in man is not the lazy acquiescence with things as they are, an idle benevolence that finds it comfortable to hold that "whatever is is right." It demands effort, energy, the concentration of the will. In its highest form it is found only in company with strong matured graces of the Christian life.

III. Few realise the marvellous influence of mercy. It calls out all that is noblest in its object. By giving him new hope it restores his belief in goodness. Nothing can be truly great but gentleness. In its highest form it is the charity which is the bond of perfectness, and which lasts when tongues have ceased, and even prophecies have vanished.

[*Original.*]

REFERENCES: vi. 36.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 35; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 193. vi. 36, 37.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225. vi. 36-42.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 348; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 202.

Chap. vi., ver. 37.—"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned."

CHRISTIAN Judgment of Others.

I. When we read, "Judge not," "Condemn not," I believe we must approach the prohibition with some such thoughts as these: "Judge and condemn I must. I cannot go through life as a good Christian, or as a useful citizen, or as a worthy filler of any of the relations of life, without repeatedly, and even daily, doing both these things. But what my Master commands seems to be: that I should not make this, which is a duty and a necessity, to be my constant habit and propensity. I must judge, true, but I need not always be judging; I must condemn, true, but my judgment must not always come to that result. I must judge of all men, at one time or another, but let my judgment, where it is an approving one, issue in confidence, so that I may sympathise with, and love and trust, others—not in an unsatisfactory habit of ever breaking up the grounds of charity, in want of confidence, withholding of sympathy, absence of trust, refusal of love. I must judge, but I may never pre-judge."

II. How are we to understand the promises by which these commands, "Judge not and condemn not," are followed? "Ye shall not be judged," and "Ye shall not be condemned." Two meanings at once occur to us, both, I believe, included. The first regards the judgment of men, "Ye shall not be judged, if ye judge not others." Men are accustomed to deal easily with one who deals easily with them. But we should be falling short of our Lord's intention in both cases were we to stop with this reference. This appears both *à priori*, from its unsatisfactory nature, as furnishing a Christian motive, and by the concluding words of this verse: "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." For this same saying occurs in another form at the end of the Lord's Prayer, in Matt. vi., where Christ says: "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you." The persons addressed are Christians—persons justified by faith, and waging the Christian conflict in the power of the spirit. In each case the command is one enjoining a mind or an act suitable to their high calling of God in Christ; the promise is one belonging to God's covenant in Christ. Everyone who endures in that covenant shall be forgiven; not because he has forgiven others, but because he has appropriated the blood of Jesus Christ by faith, and that blood cleanseth from all sin.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. v., p. 49.

I. How are we to understand these words? Does the Saviour mean that we are to form no opinion whatever about the character and conduct of persons with whom we come into contact? Or that, if we form an opinion, it must always be a favourable one? Obviously not. In the first place, to do so were simply impossible. The same faculty in us which inclines us to approve of a noble deed, inclines us also to disapprove of an ignoble one. We like the one; we dislike the other. Instinctively and gradually, by fine and almost imperceptible accretions, an estimate of our neighbour grows up in our mind, which is most truly and really a judgment which we pass upon him. Our Saviour here means that there can be no legitimate judging of others, except where there has been previously a severe and thorough-going judging of oneself. He means that the only man to form a proper estimate of the conduct of his neighbours is the man who lies humbly before God as a sinner himself; and who, conscious of his own deep need of forgiveness, is continually coming to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Such a man will indeed—for he must—form opinions

about others. Sometimes he may even be constrained to blame and to rebuke; but when he does so, he will do it with reluctance, and not with satisfaction—with moderation, and not with exaggeration—with love, and not with harshness. Such a spirit would show itself (1) in our putting the best possible construction we can on the behaviour of others; (2) another result would be that we should never dare to pronounce upon the final doom of a fellow-creature.

II. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." God will mete out to us the severity with which we deal with others. Christianity does not forbid us to discern sin in others; nay, it enjoins upon us occasionally to rebuke sin, but always in a tender, loving spirit, and as those who, being conscious of the evil in themselves, desire their brother's real and lasting benefit. But Christianity also says: "If you take pleasure in condemnation, and condemn others in a censorious and self-exalting spirit, beware of the consequences which you are bringing down upon yourself. You are dictating to God the method in which He shall deal with you at the great day of judgment; you are for giving others justice without mercy, and you shall have justice without mercy yourself."

G. CALTHROP, *Words Spoken to My Friends*, p. 284.

REFERENCE: vi. 37.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 142.

Chap. vi., ver. 38.—"Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again."

THIS is one of those keen-edged, far-reaching sayings of our Lord's which make us understand the testimony of the Apostle who knew Him best: "He needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man"—one of those sayings which sum up in a few words the experience of all lives and of many sides of life. Our consciousness witnesses to its truth, and in doing so witnesses to the justice of the world of what has been called God's "natural government."

I. It is true as between man and man. Such as we are to others, such in the long-run will others be to us. Generosity calls out generosity; confidence wins confidence; love is answered to by love. We know all this very well, though we sometimes forget it. Men are to us what we are to them. The disposition that hoards, that grudges, that counts up its own

rights, and is extreme to mark any omission or slight on the part of another, seals up men's hearts against itself. "Give, and it shall be given," even in money; but in things far beyond money—in love, trust, loyalty, hearty and affectionate service.

II. It is true, again, as between ourselves and life. Life, too, is what we make it, deals with us as we deal with it. To the selfish it is as a churl. To the generous it opens its fountains of beauty and happiness. Give your best, and you shall receive its best. Stinted and measured labour, half-hearted devotion, lukewarm interest—what mutilated results, what poor inadequate returns do they always bring, in youth and in age, in work and in play. Lose yourself, forget yourself in healthy work, in true love, in a noble cause, and you will find yourself again in a larger, freer, happier life.

III. Once more, the saying is verified as between ourselves and God, "With what measure ye mete." Even He is, in a sense, to us what we are to Him. Pray, and your prayers shall be heard. Believe, and God will be real to you. *Trust and obey*, and you shall know that you have not trusted in vain. Shut yourself up from Him, and He will shut Himself up from you. E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 146.

THE first word to be said on this subject—and one which must come before the word which we are specially to consider—is "*Get.*" Fill the basket and the store. The desire of possessing is one of the springs of many a noble character and of many a noble career. It is one of the root principles of the manifold and wonderful activity and enterprise and resource of our industrial life. That principle builds our cities, wings our ships, extends our empire over all the world. A great part of Christian virtue and goodness consists in harmonising this principle with others; but without it nothing could be done. And now comes the second word, "Give." Begin to give as soon as you begin to get. That, and that only, will prevent the danger of a growing covetousness.

I. The giving should be in some proportion to the income. I do not presume to fix the proportion with arithmetical exactness. There are insuperable difficulties in the way of fixing or naming any numerical proportions for Christian liberality. But we insist on the *principle* of a fair and just proportion, and on the consequent duty of the individual to turn the principle into practice, and to find out for himself how much his own proportion ought to be.

II. This proportion will never be reached, or, at any rate, will hardly for any long time be continued, except in connection with another principle of far deeper hold and wider sway: the principle that what is left is given too—that all we have belongs to God—that we ourselves are not our own. This principle penetrates to the very centre of our being, and sweeps round the widest circumference of our life. It is becoming more and more evident that the religion of Christ is such that we cannot touch the spirit and essence of it by anything less than wholeness of consecration. But when we give the whole—ourselves, our endowments, our possessions—then the giving of each part in fit time and place cannot be less than a blessedness and a joy.

III. It is also true that we shall never understand really what Christian giving is until we get beyond and above what is called the "duty" of it—to this higher ground, where only the blessedness of it will be felt, and where we shall hear very clearly the Master's words, standing as we shall do in His nearer presence, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 204.

REFERENCES: vi. 38.—H. Whitehead, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 19; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 89; F. O. Morris, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 49; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 346; E. H. Abbott, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 278. vi. 39, 40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1,248.

Chap. vi., ver. 40.—**"The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master."**

LIFE, the School for Eternity.

I. Look at the Great Teacher. Let anyone, that ever has been taught by anyone, say what are the requisites to make pleasant and effective teaching. Even a child will answer, "Two things: a thorough knowledge of his subject, and a power of sympathising with the mind which he is instructing." What must it be, then, to be taught by omniscience? by Him who can say, of all knowledge, in a sense no other could pretend unto, "I speak that I have seen"? How easy to learn the most difficult thing in the universe, when He makes it like a sunbeam. And yet, all the while, of all the things Jesus knows, there is nothing He knows so well as He knows man—his capability, his weakness, his slowness, his perplexities. So that His omniscience is not greater than His compassion and consideration.

II. From the Master look at the lesson-book. A book with

a precept, and an example, and an illustration upon every point: deep principles carried out rightly to their lofty conclusions—close reasoning with exquisite imagery—appeals to the affections always running equal with the convictions of the understanding. Now in this school, where Christ teaches the Bible, it is unnecessary for me to remark that no scholar can ever be greater than his Master.

III. "Every one that is perfect shall be as his master." The word does not convey equality, but similarity. The reflection is not equal to the original ray, but it is "as it." The picture is not like the original, but it is "as it." The inferior intellect is as the loftier mind from which it has taken its tone and sentiments. Therefore the true sense is this: "Every one whom God has furnished"—that is the original word—'shall resemble his master." As the well-taught pupil takes the colour from his preceptor, so shall you, by little and by little, take the mind of Jesus. You shall see things from the same standpoint. Your thoughts, your ideas, your modes of action, your inner man, shall gradually assimilate to Him. There shall be similarity.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 368.

REFERENCES: vi. 40.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xi., p. 178; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 231. vi. 41.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 73; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 118. vi. 41, 42.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 38. vi. 43, 44.—*Ibid.*, p. 76. vi. 44.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 361. vi. 45.—J. Martineau, *Endeavours after the Christian Life*, p. 487. vi. 46-9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,702.

Chap. vi., vers. 47, 48.—**"Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: he is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock," etc.**

THE Fortress Home.

There are here two great periods set before us: one, when the builders are occupied in working, themselves and their work being all in all; the other, when they and their work together are being tested by forces from without, and no additions can be made of importance. It is too late then. You cannot build in a storm.

I. All doing of right and duty in a Christian land is hearing Christ's words and doing them. Christ's words have touched everything we do with holy power. Every one of you is playing

the part of one or other of the two builders mentioned. You are building your character by thoughts, words, and actions, daily; and the true building is to be a fortress against coming storms. The storm will not come yet, but it shall come in time. But mark this: how strong, how earnest, how uninviting the beginning is! Digging deep, and building underground. What forethought, what labour, what collecting of materials, and for a long time nothing to show for it; nothing above ground, no beauty. Whilst the building without foundations begins at once to make a show, to give shelter, to excite admiration, to please the eye, and to answer every purpose of summer enjoyment.

II. When the flood does come, and beats upon the principles and character formed in earlier years of toil, one feels the rocks, and wonders how all good work has been secretly framed so as to save at last in the hour of need. Nothing honestly done for good ever is lost. It is a stone in the building, and nobody can ever tell beforehand on which stone or stones the flood shall beat most violently. You ought all to be building fortress homes for the coming hour, when there will be no time, when it will be too late to think about protecting yourselves from the flood. Dig deep to find the rock. Be not contented with less; find Christ, be true, build on His truth. It is a glorious thing day by day to become more and more sure that your life is on the rock, your work eternal, to find happiness, rest and peace, the fruit of faithful honest work, to have heard Christ, to have trusted Him, and built your fortress home on Him.

E. THRING, *Uppingham Sermons*, vol. i., p. 10.

REFERENCES: vi. 47-9.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 90. vi. 49.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 91. vii. 1-10.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 138; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 108; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 47; T. R. Stevenson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 59; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 27. vii. 2-9.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 213. vii. 3-5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 751. vii. 4-9.—*Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 90; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 600. vii. 5.—J. C. Galloway, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 40. vii. 6.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 31. vii. 6-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 800. vii. 9.—Bishop Moorhouse, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 296. vii. 11.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, p. 325. vii. 11-15.—A. Mackennal, *Christ's Healing Touch*, p. 142; *Clerical Library: Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 72; A. Macleod, *Talking to the Children*, p. 81; S. A. Brooke, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 305. vii. 11-16.—T. R. Stevenson, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 197. vii. 11-17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 350; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 153; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 54; W. Hanna,

Our Lord's Life on Earth, p. 169. vii. 12.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 319. vii. 12-16.—*Homilist*, vol. v., p. 361. vii. 12-17.—G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 190.

Chap. vii., ver. 13.—"When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her."

I. It were vain to inquire why human nature requires sympathy; we can only appeal to experience, and we find it to be so. And let the compassionate see in the conduct of their Lord, and in the perfect example of compassion which He sets before us, how they ought always to act in their compassion for a friend. Though full of the deepest feeling, how calm the blessed Jesus stands before the bier of the young man, the only son of a widowed mother. What we require in a friend is not the mere verbal expression of sympathy, or what the cold world, in complimentary language, calls condolence; but with the sympathy we look also for the advice and suggestions of which we are conscious, our minds being paralysed the while with grief, that we stand so greatly in need.

II. Grief is not sin. The sin consists only in the excess of grief; and grief is excessive when it incapacitates us for the duties of our station, or leads us to distrust of our God. This in truth is the struggle of human nature, during the threescore years and ten of its trial—to bring the human will into subjection to the Divine. The question is not as to the amount of pain and grief which it may cost us to obey; but whether, notwithstanding the pain and grief, we are ready to submit, and from our trust in God's goodness, through faith to acquiesce with thankfulness in the dispensations of Providence, however painful they may prove to be. When God takes away the friend of our bosom, or the child of our affection, He does not call upon us to rejoice; but He simply requires us to be resigned—that is, submissively to yield what God requires of us under the conviction suggested by faith, that it is best that so it should be. There is no sin in praying, "Father, let this cup pass from me," for so prayed our sinless Lord; but there would be sin in failing to say, "Father, not my will but Thine be done," when the will of the Father that the cup should not pass from us, is declared.

W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 174.

References: vii. 13.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 340. vii. 13, 14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 177. vii. 13-15.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32. vii. 14.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*,

2nd series, p. 32; R. W. Evans, *Parochial Sermons*, vol. i., p. 41; J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 275; W. H. Cooper, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 195. vii. 14, 15.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 278; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 14th series, p. 37.

Chap. vii., ver. 15.—"He that was dead sat up, and began to speak."

I. NOTE the mournful occasion which called forth this miracle: a widowed mother following the corpse of her only son.

II. Observe the sympathy which was shown for the widow's affliction. "Much people of the city was with her."

III. Our Saviour addressed the broken-hearted mother in words of comfort.

IV. The same Divine Lord who wrought this miracle shall hereafter awaken not one but all the dead, and restore all who have fallen asleep in Him to the beloved who have mourned their loss.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 405.

Chap. vii., ver. 15.—"And He delivered him to his mother."

"HE delivered him to his mother. That is the Saviour's one comment in act on His miracle. Life has many purposes. Death has many secrets. Here was a soul, one among the very few that have recrossed the great gulf, have been in the world of substance, and come back to the world of shadows. What would we give to ask questions of it! But we cannot. "Something sealed the lips" of all concerned in the story. We know not if that momentary glimpse of another life faded as a dream fades when we wake and seem to remember vividly for a moment, and then all vanishes and cannot be recalled. Did life look changed to him? Had temptation lost its power? We might have thought that such a recall from eternity to time would have been the prelude to some great demand on faith and resolution, some great renewal of spirit and life. But our Lord does not say, "You know now what in life is worth anything; sell all that thou hast, and come, follow Me." "He delivered him to his mother." That was the aspect of the young man's life most in the Saviour's thoughts. The son's place was by his mother's side—his place of duty, his place of safety. If his life was to be lived again, the first note of its renewal would be truer filial devotion, more complete filial service. Note—

I. A mother's love. What else is like it? in its tenderness,

its unselfishness, its inexhaustible patience; the love that finds no tasks too humble or too exacting; the love that waits for us, unchanged, even deepened, by the sorrows which strike deepest, by fears, by wrong.

II. A mother's claim. It is a claim which grows more urgent as her need grows sorer; when her burdens are no longer divided; when the greatest desolation that life can bring has fallen upon her; but it is a claim that belongs to her from the first, resting on nature, on God's primal law.

III. A mother's sorrow. Death is not the only one, not perhaps the saddest. Death, the death of the dearest, is not to us, if we are Christians, what it was even to the widow of Nain in that hour of desolation. There is to us light and love behind the veil. But a mother may lose a boy in another way, and one in which it is harder to gain trust and peace. Her son is going a way that she cannot follow him, a way that never meets again the way he has left.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 181.

REFERENCES: vii. 15.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 205. vii. 17, 18.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 89. vii. 17-19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 293; vii. 18-23.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 286; *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 305. vii. 18-24.—E. de Pressensé, *The Mystery of Suffering*, p. 191. vii. 19.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 107. vii. 19-28.—*Ibid.* vol. i., pp. 128, 211.

Chap. vii., ver. 22.—"Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached."

THE description of His own work which Jesus returned for the instruction and encouragement of the Baptist presents these three features: (1) it is a ministry of abundant charity to the temporal needs of needy men; (2) it is a ministry of Divine promise and help—"the poor receive glad tidings;" (3) these two are blended naturally and simply together.

I. On part of this ground we are at one; it is that of desire to minister to the good and increase the happiness of our fellow-men. To ask in what good and happiness consist might seem pedantic and abrupt. But on the way in which these things may be increased men feel that they have learned something. We have two results of present teaching: (1) that happiness is a harmony between man and his surroundings;

(2) the rule or method of charity, making charity to consist in giving our personal help and service, and in bringing to the needy those things which, for ourselves, have given brightness and interest and worth to life. Can we bring the two into relation with one another, and then with Christ's type of ministry as suggested in the text?

II. Turn back your thoughts upon the history of human happiness, and think of its earlier stages. Under simple and primitive conditions, nature seems to provide man with a stock of happiness, or of material for happiness; he gains happiness from his harmony with his surroundings, as proved in the pleasures of the bodily instincts or functions, in the glad response of vital energy, in muscle and limb, to moderate demands for exertion, in the earliest forms of human intercourse in family or clan, and by degrees in the exercise of skill or resource, and in the power to appreciate beauty or grandeur in nature around him. In proportion as consciousness becomes articulate, and reflection awakes, man must, by the very nature of his mind, grasp all that is outside himself into a whole. He must look before and after and above. What then if there comes a time when the world's face is darkened? Civilisation has developed, but man seems to be no gainer. The effect of increased wealth and knowledge seemed to have only sapped old-fashioned simplicities and virtues, and substituted the power of money for the power of loyalty and right. What can we do to minister to men's needs. The answer has been forming in men's minds, even when they have not realised all its meaning. Make it possible for men to believe in happiness; make it possible for them to believe in love. Give them the things which will brighten their life, glimpses of the beauty of nature or art or intellect; recover for them the simple pleasures of the poorest and humblest thing that can be called a home. Make impossible regions of human life visited by no light of human sympathy, or lightened by no hope of human succour. Open to them possibilities of aspiration. Restore in this way gently a sense of harmony with the order of things into which they have been born. Soothe the dumb exasperation which comes of having to live in a world that means nothing but darkness and want and fear. And then give yourself, your personal help; use your freedom of time, your money if you have it, your acquirements of understanding, knowledge, still to convince them that there is such a thing as unselfish and compassionate love. And leave the inference to them. The

very poverty and misery which have once blossomed for them with the miraculous fruit of a true charity will never seem the same again. You have gone among them to carry as far as in you lies whatever of bright and beautiful, of good and pure, of loving and tender, could bear witness that life carries hope with it. And thereby you have given them an alphabet by which to read the witness of the beauty, the greatness, the tenderness of Christ. You can speak to them of Christ, not only as a witness of what may be or what shall be, but as a present Giver of all precious gifts. Or, more truly, of one gift which implies the rest—the gift of God's love certainly known, and with a joyful confidence of faith actually received and welcomed into their souls.

E. S. TALBOT, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Jan. 31st, 1884.

REFERENCES: vii. 22.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 316. vii. 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 135. vii. 24.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 39.

Chap. vii., ver. 28.—"**For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.**"

WHAT can these words mean? Well, let us consider what constituted the highest, that is, the spiritual greatness of the prophets, and try to discover whether in relation to all these things it is not true that the very least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than the greatest of the prophets.

I. They were inspired men. Some of them had great natural genius. All of them received the supernatural illumination of the Holy Ghost. They had revealed to them the eternal principles of righteousness by which God governs the world. But your knowledge and view of the Divine character and will is far larger than theirs was. The very least knows what they did not know—the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, God manifest in the flesh.

II. But the prophets, you may say, were illustrious for their sanctity. How can the very least in the kingdom of heaven be greater than they were? Here again we must distinguish between what may be called the natural force of moral character and supernatural holiness. There is a genius in some men for heroic forms of goodness, as there is genius in others for poetry, music, eloquence, and art. The magnificent energy of Elijah, the chivalry of David's better days, the stately dignity of Abraham—these may not be ours; but the very least in the

kingdom of heaven has an element and a spring of holiness which did not belong to any of them. In the sense in which we are in Christ they could not be; and in the sense in which we are regenerate they were not. The Spirit that Christ possessed is granted now to us. We have possibilities of holiness higher and greater far than belonged to the saints of the old dispensation.

III. The third element in the greatness of the prophets consists, no doubt, in the intimacy of their relations to God. They were God's chosen servants; they were trusted by God with great duties: some of them were called God's friends, but a nobler title belongs to the very least in the kingdom of heaven than belonged to the very greatest of them. We belong to the race that has sprung from the Second Adam, and the very least of those who have sprung from the Second Adam must be greater than the greatest of those that sprang from the first.

IV. They had close access to God. This was an element of greatness in the old prophets, and yet remember that their access to God was access to God under the conditions of the old economy. It was to be had, not as we may have it now, by the immediate approach of our soul to the eternal Father, through Christ Jesus our Lord, but it was to be had through the ministry of the priests, and through the efficacy of sacrifice. Now we are greater in all this than the prophets were, for God is nearer now to the least in the kingdom of heaven than He was to the greatest in the old days.

R. W. DALE, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 394.

REFERENCES: vii. 24-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 208. vii. 28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 89. vii. 29.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 99. vii. 29-35.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 183. vii. 31-4.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 127. vii. 31-5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xiv., p. 91; R. Lorimer, *Bible Studies in Life and Truth*, p 293. vii. 33-5.—G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, pp. 57, 69.

Chap. vii., ver. 35.—**"But Wisdom is justified of all her children."**

WISDOM is justified, *i.e.* approved, of all her children.

I. None but the children of Wisdom can justify her. What a really unread page is the whole page of nature; what a riddle is providence; what an inscrutable mystery is the method of Divine grace in saving a sinner; what an unreality is the inner life of a spiritual man to anyone in whom there has not yet

taken place a certain inward transformation—a teaching, purifying, assimilating process. Hence every heart, in its natural state, is always mistaking God, always misjudging Him in everything God says and everything God does. And the misconstruction is always deepening, just in proportion as the subject rises. In the outer circle of God's works there is ignorance, and in the inner circle of His glorious Gospel utter blindness and universal distortion. Just like the children in the market-place, in the music of God's love they see nothing but melancholy ; and in the solemn denunciations of His wrath they find no fear.

II. In God's great universe—the house of creation—all are either servants or children. Everything serves Him. Some of His servants serve as His children. Here is the difference. The servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth ; the child does. Wisdom, all wisdom, is justified, vindicated, honoured, loved, understood, of all her children. Therefore, be one of Wisdom's children, and sooner or later the blessed consequence must follow. The dark place in the experience of life, the hard passage of Scripture, the difficulty in the character of that Christian, the offensive doctrine, will all be cleared up. Be the enigma and the difficulty what they may, the declaration is that they shall all be justified in Christ. And the justifying process will go on and on, more and more, till that very wisdom shall come again in His unveiled beauty. At that moment the series will be consummated, when no longer shall He be justified only but glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 303.

Chap. vii., vers. 36-50.

I. THE narrative encourages sinners of every name and degree to go at once to Christ. He will in nowise cast them out. There are no more touching stories in the Gospels than those which tell how Jesus dealt with the most degraded class of sinners. Recall His conversation with the woman of Samaria, at the well of Sychar. Bring up before you once again that scene in the Temple, where the scribes and Pharisees dragged in before Him the woman who had been taken in the very act of sin. Then read anew this narrative, and say if the prophecy regarding Him was not true, "A bruised reed shall He not break ; the smoking flax shall He not quench." Where man perceived no promise of success, and would have been tempted to give up the individual as hopeless, He would labour on until the reed which

had given forth a note jangled and out of tune was restored to its original condition, and gave its own quota to the harmony of Jehovah's praise.

II. If we would be successful in raising the fallen and reclaiming the abandoned, we must be willing to touch them and be touched by them. In other words, we must come into warm, loving, personal contact with them. What an uplift Christ gave to the soul of this poor woman, when He, the pure and holy, let *her* thus approach Him. When the Lord wished to save the human race, He touched it by taking on Him our nature, without our nature's pollution. So we must take the nature of the degraded, without its impurity, if we would help Him.

III. If we wish to love God much, we must think much of what we owe to Him. Low views of sin lead to a light estimate of the blessing of pardon, and a light estimate of the blessing of pardon will lead to but a little love of God.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 210.

REFERENCES: vii. 36-50.—Phillips Brooks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 342; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 75; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 28; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 184; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 214; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol vi., p. 214. vii. 37, 38.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 129; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 801; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 312; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 153. vii. 38.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 90.

Chap. vii., ver. 39.

CHRIST in Simon's House; the Pharisee's Mistake:—

I. As it regarded Christ. (1) He could not read Christ's nature, and undervalued it; (2) he mistook also Christ's way of rescuing from sin.

II. As it regarded the woman. (1) The Pharisee thought that as a sinner she was to be despised; (2) he did not see that into her heart a new life had entered.

III. As it regarded himself. (1) The Pharisee showed that he did not know his own heart; (2) he did not see that in condemning this woman he was rejecting the salvation of Christ. (*a*) Those who profess religion should be careful how they give a false view of it, by uncharitable judgments and by assumptions of superiority. (*b*) We must remind those who profess to be seeking religion, that they are bound to form their judgment of it from its Author. J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 16.

REFERENCE: vii. 39.—J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 323.

Chap. vii., vers. 40-3.

A State of Sin a State of Debt.

I. We are all debtors to God. Having failed to discharge the debt of obligation, we now owe a debt of punishment.

II. We are debtors in different degrees.

III. We are unable to pay our debts. Not only debtors, but bankrupts.

IV. God is willing, for Christ's sake, freely to forgive us all.

V. Our love to God should be proportioned to the amount of the debt which He has forgiven.

G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines*, p. 55.

The Forgiveness of Sins the Remission of a Debt.

I. *Sin is a debt*—that is the primary idea of this parable. But I can well understand a thoughtful person saying, "I can see the beauty and truth of this illustration. There is a burden which each man bears—the burden of the sense of sin, from which he yearns to be delivered. But there are other aspects of sin which the parable of a money-debt does not seem to me to include or to cover, because such an obligation lies altogether outside the sphere of morals. A debtor need not be a sinner; the creditor may have no cause for anger against him. Moreover, if the money were paid, the obligation would be at an end. I want to know how far offences of another kind, moral derelictions of man against man, are analogous in nature and in remedy to our sins against a just and righteous God?"

II. We are all debtors. We owe to God that which we can never pay for ourselves. What we need, therefore, is a remission of the debt. If we bear this well in mind, we shall look upon sin and death with truer eyes. Exemption from any penalty, supposed to be incurred by non-payment of the debt, could not benefit us. "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Here the word debtors is clearly used for all who have failed to pay us our due, whether that due be money or the commoner obligations of every-day life. Every time an offence is committed against us, it is a debt that is incurred. Our friend owes us something which he has not paid. The language of the Lord's Prayer, as recorded by St. Matthew, strictly accords with that of the parable of the two debtors. A friend does us a wrong. It is for us either to retain or remit the debt he has incurred. We are willing to remit his debt, if he is willing that it should be remitted. It is impossible to forgive where forgiveness is not desired. I cannot remit the

debt of sin which my brother has incurred unless he is willing that it should be remitted. His debt is love, and no suffering or penalty could restore that broken link. Reconciliation is a bond of righteousness. The offender cannot be forgiven without penitence on his side. If it pleased God to save us from hell-fire, still He could not save us from an avenging conscience. It is idle, and worse than idle, for us to murmur against a revelation of hell. If there is a heaven, there must be a hell. If the pure in heart see God, the vision of the impure must be sin and Satan.

A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 115.

REFERENCE: vii. 41-4.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 218.

Chap. vii., ver. 42.—"And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both."

OUR State of Debtorship before God.

I. What does the Saviour mean by representing sin as a debt? We can well understand in the abstract what a debt is. In looking at our state of debtorship towards God, we should take the simplest and the most meaning view of the subject first. We look simply at ourselves as being creatures of God's creation. "It was He that made us, and not we ourselves." Everything that we have comes from God—our existence, our friends, our blessings, our indulgences, our faculties, our powers; everything that we have has come from the same hand, poured plenteously upon us by our God. And if all this be so, we have a foundation here of obligation. Let the relationship be admitted and the consequence follows, that we are placed in a state of subserviency to God, and that God has a simple right to our services.

II. Look next at man's state of utter insolvency. You will see at once that the parable is constructed according to the usages of the courts of law. There is a certain charge for a debt incurred lying against the debtor, and a demand that that debt should be paid. When we look to the question of the liquidation or the removal or satisfaction of crime, there are four ways in which it may be done: (1) we may traverse the indictment altogether; (2) we may plead palliation; (3) we may propose to offer an atonement; and (4) failing these three, we may throw ourselves on the mercy of the court. In none of these ways is it possible that man can be cleared of his

offences. God can only afford to be merciful through Christ Jesus. There must be a compensation given to offended justice, otherwise God cannot be just and the Justifier of those who believe. When the Saviour came into the world and took our transgressions upon Himself, when He looked upon the mountain of iniquity that was crushing us down, and shed His own precious blood as an atonement, then justice was satisfied, and mercy was open to plead along with justice. It is in this way that the Gospel makes clear to us the only method by which any sinner can expect mercy.

A. BOYD, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 121.

REFERENCES: vii. 42.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 93; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxix., No. 1,730.

Chap. vii., vers. 44-50.

THE Forgiveness of Sin the Remission of a Debt.

I. There are a peculiar tenderness and quiet pathos about this narrative which have commended it to many, even of those who have no taste for dogmatic religion. It is one of those incidents which, like the sickness and death of Lazarus, can be separated from the general Gospel narrative; little idylls, if the expression be allowable, of human sorrow, and the aspirations which arise out of it. We know nothing of this woman save that she lived a profligate life in the city: she had been a sinner; she is now a penitent; and that is all we know. There had been something which was a part of this woman, and which had kept her distant from God; and this was sin. It was not that she was on earth and God in heaven—this was not the gulf between them; nor that He was a powerful despot and she a weak slave; but that He was holy and she unholy. And now her old waywardness and pollution, which had hung like a millstone about her neck, had dropped off. She had become sorry and ashamed of self, through companionship with a holy life, and through being admitted to share a love which was the love of God. The debt which she had not paid He could pay and was paying.

II. A question about a simple Greek conjunction, that which in the English version is rendered "for"—"her sins, which are many, are forgiven; *for* she loved much"—has introduced doubt into the meaning of a passage which is otherwise quite free from difficulty. The whole drift of the story, and the parable introduced to interpret it, point to the true meaning. The love

is the fruit of the discovery that reconciliation is possible. For it is impossible to separate forgiveness from reconciliation. If forgiveness were the remission of a penalty, it would be possible to be forgiven and yet to be unreconciled. For the exemption of a soul from penal suffering does not and cannot unite a soul with God. In the case before us, forgiveness was only valued by the woman, as it was the beginning of a new life. Till she had met Christ, sin seemed no sin to her; but it rested with unutterable bitterness upon Him. She had not grieved for herself, but He had grieved for her, and for every sinner who was living in exile from God. Surely He had borne the griefs and carried the sorrows of the world, and was bearing them; and as she awoke to feel this, she was abased with shame which showed itself in tears, but filled also with the surest sign of humility, the gratitude which brought Him of her costliest and best. A. AINGER, *Sermons in the Temple Church*, p. 130.

Chap. vii., ver. 47.—"Her sins, which were many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

WE learn from this story that such love as the Magdalene showed to our blessed Lord is the point of forgiveness, of forbearance, and of service. "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

I. Now it is this which differences the Gospel from all other systems of religion, that it promises reconciliation only to the loving. One code of morals declares that obedience is the only avenue to pardon; but this may be merely deistic. Another code of morals asserts that repentance is the only road to forgiveness; but that may be merely Jewish. Jesus Christ proclaims that absolution is only pronounced upon the affectionate. Now there is in this no confusion between right and wrong, no pretence that guilt is as beautiful as grace; but since all men sin, and since all need pardon, they gain the richest, the blessedest gift of forgiveness, whose hearts are warmest of love for the Saviour.

II. Love is the fountain of reverence. This woman was conspicuous for the earnest, devout, uncalculating veneration which she paid to the Redeemer. The Pharisee had his notion of the proprieties which belong to reverence; but they were very unlike the unaffected, the passionate, worship of the Magdalene. The fastidious Pharisee would have been quite shocked to start aside, even by a hair's breadth, from religious decorum and etiquette; but the woman's heart was all aglow with the

gifts and the sense of pardon; and with the vision of a higher life she can only tell her veneration in the accents of reverence which were too real to be restrained. Like her, we must go boldly to the throne of grace, blending confidence with worship, respect with affection, and reverence with rapture.

III. Love is the fountain of service. The Pharisee had his idea of this service. He had coldly and carefully regulated all his obligations. He paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin. He could set down in order his notions of duty, and formulate them into a code of morals; but all this obedience was as a cold light shining upon his intellect and not in his heart. But one single feature in his character attracted the notice of Christ—he had no heart filled and overflowing with love. It was not an enormity; it was a lacking. But this woman, who is only known to us by her contrition and her reverence, won the Saviour's heart by the simplicity and the beauty of her service. Only the heart of a woman could have conceived a service or a gift so full of tender pathos, so fragrant, so exquisite. It was her best—it was her all; for it is the instinct of love to give not only largely, but also sweetly. Her generosity had no stint, and her method had no rudeness.

H. WHITE, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 964.

THE point to which we specially direct our attention is the self-accusing spirit of this woman; its necessity and its blessedness.

I. For, first of all, it may be said, that the kingdom of Christ is founded upon those who accuse themselves of their sins. It has both an exterior and an interior foundation, an outer and an inner court. On His part it is a perpetual ministry of absolution; on our part, a perpetual confession. In the midst of the visible Church, Christ numbers, by direct intention, the fellowship of true penitents. In them He dwells, and to them He listens. He has no communion with those who do not know their need of His absolving pity. The law of repentance is laid on all, even on the greatest saints; it often seems to press more heavily on them than on others; for as they have more of sanctity, they have more of love; and as they have more of love, they have more of sorrow. As the light rises upon them, they see more clearly their own deformities. It is the greatest light of sanctity that reveals the least motes of evil; as things imperceptible in the common light of day float visible in the sunbeam.

II. Self-accusation is the test which separates between true and false repentance. Under all the manifold appearances of religion and of repentance, there are at last two, and only two, states or postures of mind; the one is self-accusation, the other self-defence.

III. The true source of the self-accusing spirit is love. A heart once touched with the love of Christ no longer strives to hide its sin, or to make it out to be little. To excuse, palliate, or lighten the guilt even of a little sin grates upon the whole inward sense of sorrow and self-abasement. So long as we defend ourselves, and God accuses us, we go heavily all the day long, our hearts glowing and smouldering within; so soon as we accuse ourselves at His feet, God and all the powers of His kingdom shelter and defend us. This is our true solace and relief. Now there are two signs by which we shall know whether our confessions are the self-accusations of penitent and loving hearts. (1) The first is, that our confessions be humble; (2) the other is, that it be an honest self-accusing. Where these two signs are, we may be strong in hope that the grace of a loving and penitent heart has been bestowed by the Spirit of God. H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 135.

I. FROM the doctrine that God is personal, and as personal the object of love, flows out the unique character of the Christian as against other forms of penitence. For other moral systems tell us that the only true repentance consists simply and entirely in amendment of life for the future, and that all the energy which, instead, is spent in sorrow for the past, is merely a waste of labour that might be otherwise employed. "The only true repentance," says a great philosopher, "is moral amendment." But still, the Christian Church, in her age-long ministry to the souls of men, has gained a deeper, truer insight into the springs of human action than is possible to speculative thinkers or to average men of the world. And as the result of her thinking, she proclaims repentance based on sorrow as not only far truer, but far more fruitful in noble practice, because born of the great desire to atone for wounded love.

II. The problem of the life of penitence is how contrition may be gained. God, men say, though we believe in Him, seems very far away from us, and the sufferings of the Cross are past and over long ago. There is no present object to help me realise that I have wounded the love of God. Go back to the history recorded in my text, and see what kind of love it was

which there merited forgiveness. This poor woman in her misery did not know that she was worshipping the everlasting Son of the Father, very God of very God. But she felt, as she looked and listened, that there was a presence in humanity, on which her life of sin had been an outrage and a shame; and in the rock-like shelter of that presence, overshadowing the weary world, the faded instincts of her true womanhood revived and blossomed into action; and her sins, which were many, were forgiven her; for she loved much. We are not bold enough in realising how true it is that the knowledge of God must be learned inductively from His presence among men.

III. Though contrition is only the first part of penitence, it is one of those halves that contains in itself the whole. For real contrition must express itself first in word and then in deed; and so it leads us onward to confession and satisfaction.

J. R. ILLINGWORTH, *Sermons in a College Chapel*, p. 90.

I. WE have Christ here standing as a manifestation of the Divine love coming forth among sinners. (1) He, as bringing to us the love of God, shows it to us, as not at all dependent upon our merits or deserts. "He frankly forgave them both" are the deep words in which He would point us to the source and the ground of all the love of God. God, and God alone, is the cause and reason, the motive and the end, of His own love to our world. (2) Whilst the love of God is not caused by us, but comes from the nature of God, it is not turned away by our sins. He knew what this woman was, and therefore He let her come close to Him with the touch of her polluted hand, and pour out the gains of her lawless life and the adornments of her former corruption upon His most blessed and most holy feet. (3) Christ teaches us here that this Divine love, when it comes forth among sinners, necessarily manifests itself first in the form of forgiveness. (4) Here we see the love of God demanding service. God's love, when it comes to men, comes that it may evoke an answering echo in the human heart, and "though it might be much bold to enjoin, yet for love's sake it rather beseeches us to give unto Him who has given all unto us."

II. Look next at "the woman" as the representative of a class of character—the penitent lovingly recognising the Divine love. All true love to God is preceded in the heart by these two things: a sense of sin and an assurance of pardon. There is no love possible—real, deep, genuine, worthy of being called love of God—which does not start with the belief of my

own transgression, and with the thankful reception of forgiveness in Christ. (1) Love is the gate of all knowledge. (2) Love is the source of all obedience.

III. A third character stands here—the unloving and self-righteous man, all ignorant of the love of Christ. He is the antithesis of the woman and her character. Respectable in life, rigid in morality, unquestionable in orthodoxy; no sound of suspicion having ever come near his belief in all the traditions of the elders; intelligent and learned, high up among the ranks of Israel! What was it that made this man's morality a piece of dead nothingness? This was the thing: there was no love in it. The Pharisee was contented with himself, and so there was no sense of sin in him; therefore there was no penitent recognition of Christ as forgiving and loving him, therefore there was no love to Christ.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons Preached in Manchester*, p. 28.

NOTE—

I. That gratitude in a living heart rises with the occasion.

II. Gratitude cannot be the same in two individuals of equal spiritual sensitiveness, but of different conditions.

III. Strong gratitude is very free in its utterance. It breaks the laws of propriety which a formalist would recognise.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 2nd series, p. 147.

REFERENCES: vii. 47.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 256; E. Bickersteth, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 149; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1881, p. 37; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 288; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. ii., p. 535. vii. 50.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 283; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,162; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 321. vii.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 126; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 89. viii. 1.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 297. viii. 1-3.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 230. viii. 1-4.—G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 87. viii. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 56. viii. 2, 3.—A. Maclaren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 273. viii. 3.—J. Baines, *Sermons*, p. 214. viii. 4—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 114. viii. 4, 5.—C. Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p 227. viii. 4-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 308; H. R. Haweis, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 132. viii. 4-15.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 55; *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 107; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 84; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 40. viii. 5.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 141; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. iv., p. 72. viii. 5-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 50. viii. 7.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 44. viii. 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 89; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iv., p. 233. viii. 10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 77.

Chap. viii., ver. 11.—"**The seed is the word of God.**"

Use the Bible.

I. God's Word is a portion of the food He has given to man to live by. It is the spiritual sustenance He has provided to support the spiritual part of us, the soul. For the soul, as well as the body, requires its fitting food. Both must be supported and nourished, if we would have them thrive. Does not all nature cry, from every part of the creation, that everything earthly must be fed? Fire must be fed, water must be fed, even the earth itself, which feeds all things, must be fed, else it will crumble into dust, or harden into a rock. So it is with the soul. That, too, as well as the body, must be fed with food suited to its nature. This is so plain that the heathen themselves knew it. They were fully aware that the soul would never thrive, unless it was nourished with food suitable to it; and to find that food was the great desire of the best and wisest men among them. Now if they did this, they who only knew that their spirits required food, from feeling them crave for it, what will God say to us, if we are less anxious about the nourishment of our souls?

II. For the Bible is not a charm that, keeping it on our shelves or locking it up in a closet, can do us any good. Neither is it a story-book to read for amusement. It is sent to teach us our duty to God and man; to show us from what a height we are fallen by sin, and to what a far more glorious height we may soar, if we will put on the wings of faith and love. This is the use of the Bible, and this use we ought to make of it. If we use the Bible thus, Christ, who is the way of life, will open our eyes to see the way. He will send you the wings I spoke of, and they shall bear you up to heaven. For this must be borne in mind, that God alone giveth the increase. Unless He gives it, no increase shall we receive. Our joy will not be increased; so that the study of God's Book will continue an irksome task. The only way of insuring that our labour shall not be fruitless is by prayer; the only way of drawing down a blessing on our study is to ask for it.

A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 278.

Chap. viii., vers. 11, 12.—"**The seed is the word of God. Those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.**"

I. The seed is the Word of God. And thus we are taught (1) That it is not in the hearers themselves. It is no result of

their reasoning; it is no creature of their imagination. It comes to them from without. (2) It possesses living, germinating power. The power is its own. It is not taken up into and made part of us, but it takes us up and makes us part of itself. (3) The seed itself does not exert its power spontaneously and independently. There must be the concurrence of three requisites: the deposition of the seed; its entrance into the soil; fitness of the soil for its germination and nurture. Where these do not concur, there is no effectual growth, no eventual bearing of fruit. Wonderful as are the powers of the seed, it is a dependent and conditional agent. Its action is first dependent on one who sows.

II. The seed, then, is scattered everywhere; and some falls by the wayside. A path or road passing through the field, by the side of this, not absolutely on the hard beaten track itself, but still where many footsteps pass and harden the soil, some of the seeds are deposited. Thus situated, the seed is liable to two dangers—"it was trodden down, and the birds of the air devoured it." The class of hearers of God's Word which is here intended is the class that understandeth not. God speaks by His minister, speaks by His revealed words, speaks in judgment, speaks in mercy; and for a moment His word lies on our hearts; for a moment we are in contact with the incorruptible regenerating seed; but our enemy knows it, he knows the import of that moment, he knows the life-giving power of that seed, and he contrives that a frivolous incident should catch the attention, or a worldly thought light down on the same surface, or a trifling companion cross our path; for these there is more desire than for the heavenly seed; they occupy the ground, and we toy with them till the seed is gone.

III. The heart is hardened: (1) By the tread of many footsteps. Much converse with the world, much converse with, the Word itself, habituation of every kind, deadens susceptibility. (2) The heart may be self-hardened by long-continued worldliness of spirit. (3) Another section of our wayside hearers are those who are intellectually pre-occupied. (4) Over-fastidiousness has a hardening influence; the heart remains shut to the living seed of the Word because it comes not exactly in the way desired. Take heed how ye hear; for with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.

H. ALFORD, *Sermons at Cambridge*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: viii. ii.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 430. viii. 12.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,459.

Chap. viii., ver. 13.—"They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away."

I. As the Lord is evermore speaking to us, and we evermore hearing Him, so must the receiving the Word with joy be extended in its meaning to include all possible receptions of that which He says. And, thus extended, we may interpret the characteristic to mean, as applied to the class before us, that they are such as do not present to the suggestions of Christ's spirit a hard, impenetrable heart; whose surface is not trodden down like the wayside, so that the seed lies on it exposed to the passing depredator, but soft and genial, so that it sinks in at once; whose soil is not the cold unkindly clay, which would keep back the seed, but warm and open, so that it swells and springs up without delay. It is good, doubtless, in a certain sense, to receive the Word with joy; it cannot be for a moment doubted, that among those who receive it with joy are some of the best and the noblest of us, some of the very flower and choice of our society.

II. "These," it is added, "have no root." The seed within them, so quick to germinate, found no depth of soil wherein to strike its roots. Above, all was genial and inviting growth; but beneath, all was hard and impenetrable. (1) Impressibility is liable to be joined with want of depth of character; it is no criterion of genuine religion, no guarantee for endurance; in other words, what are called religious impressions are very far from being religion, and must not be mistaken for it. (2) There is another perilous consideration for the susceptible. Men are not strongly impressed on one subject only. They hear the Word with joy; but it is not the only thing which they thus hear. The world, too, has a voice, the tempter has a voice; all these, it is to be feared, they hear with joy likewise—such, at least, is their tendency. They have no root; nothing with them strikes deep into the individual character. Their joy in the Word is evanescent, their impression fleeting. That love to Christ which sprung up in their hearts, that holy obedience which seemed to be the rule of their lives, having no root, never having come from firm conviction or thorough persuasion, shall pass away, and be as though they had never been.

H. ALFORD, *Sermons at Cambridge*, p. 25.

REFERENCES: viii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 11; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 11th series, p. 45.

Chap. viii., ver. 14.—"That which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection."

I. With the class of hearers mentioned in this verse all is favourable, and all goes well at first. Hearers of this kind present not to the Word of God the inattentive ear, nor the hardened heart; they rejoice not with easy and shallow susceptibility over that which they have heard. They are, at the sowing-time, such soil as the sower loves. They hear and weigh and understand. And having heard, they go forth into the world again, thoroughly determined to practise that which they have heard. But, alas! they are not men living in habits of diligent self-culture and discipline. The heart which ought to have long ere this cleared for God's Word to grow in, to assimilate, to take up into itself, is filled with rank growths of worldliness, and possessed by the tangled roots of the weeds of passion; and as soon as they have gone forth, these spring up with the Word, and ultimately choke its progress.

II. "The cares of life"—"the deceitfulness of riches." It has been commonly supposed that these two embrace the two conditions of life—the poor and the rich; those who have to care for every day's supply of want, and those who are deceived and forget God, in consequence of its ample supply. But for this there seems no necessity. The two may co-exist in the heart of the same hearer, be he rich or poor. As riches increase cares increase; and, in the very poorest, the deceitfulness of worldly substance, and the love of amassing it, and the danger of trusting to it, may be active or imminent. And as every portion of the parable points to a whole department of Christian duty, to be earnestly taken in hand and attended to, so in this case it is self-discipline which is mainly pointed at—discipline of thought, discipline of affection, discipline of pursuit. Let this be our discipline against the deceitfulness of riches—to think more of Christ's character and of that great work which He has done for us. Let our discipline for care be faith, and for worldliness, obedience; the one teaching us to trust Christ, the other to imitate Him.

H. Alford, *Sermons at Cambridge*, p. 47.

Chap. viii., ver. 15.—"But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience."

The hearers referred to in the text yield fruit, which none of the others did. In them, all pointed at failure; in these, all point

at success. In them, even the bright colours of promise were dashed with sadness; in these, even the weakness of our common humanity is gilded with the coming glory. In them, every apparent success contained the elements of failure; in these, even partial failure is an earnest of final success.

I. Notice how the difficulties are overcome, and the hindrances removed, in an inverse order from that in which they were fatal. The deepest defect, the most deadly hindrance, was in the will; the will undecided, many-purposed, disloyal; the outworks taken, but the citadel still rebellious. Now mark the difference. First, the will is secured. The heart is honest and good; the direction of the will is plain and simple. The expression "an honest and good heart" conveys to us the idea of ingenuousness, nobleness of purpose, united with goodness, properly so called; such a person would be clear and simple in intent, and that intent a good one.

II. "Having heard the Word, they keep it; they hold it with a fulness of conscious and permanent possession; the feelers of the mind, so to speak, clasp round it, and its roots become twined inseparably among them; they take the Word to themselves in the very depth of affection and earnestness, as a father the son in whom he delighteth." In a word, and that word one often heard, but little pondered on, and even less realised, they *love* God; their hearts are drawn after Him; a new and mighty power has taken possession of them, and is transforming them into the Divine likeness, and making them to bring forth fruit acceptable to God, and that in rich abundance.

III. As in the parable of the talents, so here, every man bears fruit according to his several ability. One plant becomes a great tree, and overshadows a wide space of the forest; another remains, equally healthy and prolific, but of smaller growth, and more limited shade. The seed is received as each man has ears to hear. But let us notice one point common to all three of the degrees of reproduction—the high standard at which all are fixed. Thirty, sixty, and a hundred. Must we not enquire whether the usual measure of our choicest Christian attainments reaches even the lowest of these? Where is the thirty-fold return even from our best soil?

H. ALFORD, *Sermons at Cambridge*, p. 71.

REFERENCES: viii. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 252; H. Alford, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 150; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 359; F. Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 180. viii. 16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 353.

Chap. viii., ver. 18.—"Take heed therefore how ye hear."

NOTWITHSTANDING the importance here attached to preaching, many who listen to sermons are really no better for it. Indeed, our Saviour more than intimates in the text that such may be the case, and hence His emphatic warning, "Take heed, therefore, how ye hear." Several classes of persons, to be met with in every congregation, should attend to this caution.

I. In the first rank of these may be placed the indifferent hearer.

II. Another class who should give heed to the warnings of the text are represented by the critical hearer.

III. A third class of church-goers who derive little benefit from preaching may be described as captious hearers. Note three simple rules in regard to hearing sermons: (1) Endeavour always to listen to the preaching of the Gospel with a mind free from prejudice. (2) Sermons should be heard with a desire to profit by them. (3) Sermons should be heard with humble dependence on God's Holy Spirit, to open the understanding and to touch the heart.

J. N. NORTON, *Golden Truths*, p. 334.

REFERENCES: viii. 18.—*Preacher's Monthly*, p. 213; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vi., p. 503; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in Sackville College*, vol. i., p. 87; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 157; J. Kelly, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 51. viii. 22-5.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 249. viii. 23.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 253.

Chap. viii., ver. 24.—"Then He arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm."

I. THERE is much in that expression that "Christ rebuked the wind and the waves." You will miss a great part of the intention of the incident if you merely look upon it as a miracle of stilling a tempest. Why did Christ rebuke the elements? The word appears the language of one who either sees moral guilt, or who, in his affection, is indignant at something which is hurting those he loves. The elements, in themselves, cannot, of course, do a moral wrong. But is it possible that the prince of the power of the air had anything to do with that storm? Was there some latent fiendish malice in that sudden outbreak of nature upon Christ and His Church? And was Christ indeed ejecting an evil spirit when He did just what He always did, and said just what He always said, when He was dealing with those who

were possessed with devils? "He rebuked them." But, however this may be, there is another aspect in which we ought to see it. We know that to the Second Adam was given what the first Adam forfeited—perfect dominion over all creation. In this light the present hurricane was like a rebellion, and Christ treated it as such, that He might show His mastership. Hence that royal word, "He rebuked them," and hence the instant submission.

II. The winds were the emblem of the external influences which affect and harass; the waves, of the inward heavings and distresses which those external influences produce upon the mind: the winds, the active, evil agencies of life; the waves, the consequence of the trials, when they fall upon you; because, as the wave answers to the wind, rising or falling with its swell or subsidence, so do our weak hearts beat or be still, and respond sensibly to the ills about us. Do not wish exemption from evil, neither from sorrow, nor yet from temptation. Immunity from grief is not half as great as God's consolation under it. Exemption is not the true peace, but deliverance, victory; the peace which Christ makes out of the materials of our troubles; the silenced fear, the subdued restlessness, the sealed pardon, the interposing grace, the triumph of an omnipotent love.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 309.

Chap. viii., ver. 25.—"And He said unto them, Where is your faith?"

THE question before us has in it a wild sublimity. The waves had just found their resting-place; the wind was gone back into its treasure-house; and our Saviour stood upon the calm, and seemed to say, "The fierce enemies have been and gone, but where is your faith?"

I. Everybody has faith. To have a trust in something is so natural, that I could almost say it is indispensable to human nature. There are faculties and principles of the human heart which must cling. Every man, however independent he thinks himself, is constituted to have some feeling in him which goes forth—which is as the creeper that creeps over your door, or as the vine which is wedded to the air. Those feelings made to twine may trail in the dust; those affections made to mount may often trail down like withered, disappointed things; they may grasp that which will never bear, or drive to that which sends back poison and death where we had looked for sustenance. Is our faith in the First Great Source? or is it in second causes?

II. Trusting to second causes is sheer idolatry. It is the essential of God that He is final; what is final is made God. There is many an idolater in heathenism who never looks upon his wretched idol, but his thoughts are led to that invisible being that the idol represents. Those who look at second causes and do not look at the First Cause are greater idolaters than the heathen. Look at our marts of commerce, look at our great assemblies, look at our great entertainments, look at our churches, and say is it not so. Are not instruments being looked at as if they were all-effective causes? What remains for a jealous God but to scatter second causes which have been elevated into a supremacy which belongs only to Him? The winds that came down upon the Sea of Galilee were but as strings in the hands of God, causing the waves to become tempestuous; and you who go up and down trusting to that which is wise in man and beautiful in nature, beware! lest presently your bright prospect gets beclouded, and a more fearful storm than that which swept over the angry sea come into your heart, to teach you to have no confidence anywhere but in God, and to look up from the dangers of this disappointing world to Him who only sits at the helm of all, and cry to Him, "Master, Master, we perish!"

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 189.

REFERENCES: viii. 25.—F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 253. viii. 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiii., No. 778. viii. 34.—R. Heber, *Parish Sermons*, vol. i., p. 160.

Chap. viii., ver. 35.—**"Then they went out to see what was done; and came to Jesus, and found the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid."**

I. CONSIDER this Story of the Demoniac. A man who was wild and furious becomes calm and orderly. He sits at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind. What has wrought this mighty change? Is it the announcement to him of some law which God has laid down for His creatures? Is it anything whatever which we comprehend under the ordinary notion of moral discipline? All these regulations were desirable, doubtless, for a man in the condition of the maniac. But common sense pronounced them ridiculous. It was obvious that they could take no effect; they must be wasted. Far more direct and simple methods were resorted to. He was chained. But that was as ineffectual a scheme of regulation as the other.

The fetters were burst asunder, the chains were broken. It is just when all mere regulations, human and Divine, are found absolutely vain to restrain him from being the curse and plague of his fellow-men, that Christ is said to have met the man Himself, to have entered into colloquy with that which could hear no laws, could be restrained by no force, and to have emancipated and reformed that. And here is the result: Not a new excitement substituted for the old, not religious paroxysms taking the place of other paroxysms; but quietness and order: he is in his right mind.

II. It is not true of the Gospel of Christ, that if you take from it its original character, if you strip it of those claims which apostles and martyrs put forth on its behalf, it may challenge respect on a lower ground, it may claim a sort of useful and recognised position for itself among the other agents of civilisation. I know such an opinion prevails in many minds. They say that "'Reft of a crown, it still may share the feast." You will find it is not so. You will find that if we dare not proclaim Christ as the Deliverer of the spirit of man from its bondage, if we dare not say that He has come actually to reveal God's righteousness to men, we had better cease to speak of Him at all. For it is such a one that men want; it is for such a one that in their inmost hearts, even when their language against the Son of Man is loudest, they are crying. It was so in former ages; so it is now. It was so among the most miserable and the most respectable; it is so still. If preachers of the Gospel do not answer the cry—if they only represent it as one of the regulative forces that are at work in society—it will be felt to be the feeblest of all these processes; the chain and the prison-house will be found stronger.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 145.

REFERENCES: viii. 35.—A. Ramsay, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 321; T. R. Stevenson, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 139: E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. i., p. 360; (Clerical Library) *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 80.

Chap. viii., ver. 38.—**"Now the man out of whom the devils were departed besought Him that he might be with Him," etc.**

THE Religious Use of Excited Feelings.

I. All the passionate emotion, or fine sensibility, which ever man displayed, will never by itself make us change our ways, and do our duty. Impassioned thoughts, sublime imaginings, have no strength in them. They can no more make a man

obey consistently than they can move mountains. If any man truly repent, it must be in consequence—not of these, but of a settled conviction of his guilt, and a deliberate resolution to leave his sins and serve God. Conscience, and reason in subjection to conscience: *these* are those powerful instruments, under grace, which change a man. But you will observe, that though conscience and reason lead us to resolve on and to attempt a new life, they cannot at once make us love it. It is long practice and habit which make us love religion; and in the beginning, obedience, doubtless, is very grievous to habitual sinners. Here, then, is the use of those ardent, excited feelings which attend on the first exercise of conscience and reason, and to take away from the beginning of obedience its grievousness, to give us an impulse which may carry us over the first obstacles, and send us on our way rejoicing. Not as if all this excitement of mind were to last (which cannot be), but it will do its office in thus setting us off; and then will leave us to the more sober and higher comfort resulting from that real *love* for religion, which obedience itself will have by that time begun to form in us, and will gradually go on to perfect.

II. To those who feel any accidental remorse for their sins violently exerting itself in their hearts, I say: Do not loiter; go home to your friends, and repent in *deeds* of righteousness and love; hasten to commit yourselves to certain difficult acts of obedience. Follow on to know the Lord; and to secure His favour by *acting* upon these impulses; by them He pleads with you as well as by your conscience; they are the instruments of His Spirit, stirring you up to seek your true peace. Still, be quite sure that resolute consistent obedience, though unattended with high transport and warm emotion, is far more acceptable to Him than all those passionate longings to live in His sight, which look like religion to the uninstructed. At the very best, these latter are but the graceful beginnings of obedience, graceful and becoming in children, but in grown spiritual men indecorous as the sports of boyhood would seem in advanced years. Learn to live by faith—which is a calm, deliberate, rational principle, full of peace and comfort, and sees Christ, and rejoices in Him, though sent away from His Presence to labour in the world. You will have your reward. He will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 112.

REFERENCES: viii. 38.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 242. viii. 38, 39.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 282. viii. 40.—*Ibid.*

vol. vi., p. 226; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 96. viii. 42.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 217; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 79. viii. 43-7.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 150.

Chap. viii., vers. 45, 46.—**"And Jesus said, Who touched Me?" etc.**

Faith's Touch. Notice:—

I. What this woman did. "Jesus said, Who touched Me?" That more is meant here than the mere manual or external touch is evident, not only from the whole circumstances of the narrative, but from the explicit and emphatic testimony of our Lord Himself. He expressly distinguishes between her touch and that of the unthinking crowd around as a thing totally and essentially different; and then, in His closing words, He declares plainly what that thing was. "Daughter: thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." That is, it was not the mere bodily contact that constituted the saving touch, but that living faith of the heart, of which it was but the instinctive and touching expression. Hers was (1) secret faith, (2) trembling faith, (3) an imperfect faith, (4) a strong faith, (5) an earnest and resolute faith.

II. What the multitude did. Note the difference between the attitude of this woman and that of the multitude around her. Theirs was the mere contact of the body, hers of the heart and soul; theirs a mere external and unmeaning pressure; hers a living act of trust and love. The human eye, indeed, could detect no difference. To a mere spectator, all stood in the same relation to Him. Surely it were vain amid such a crowd, all of whom are pressing on Him, and thronging His path, to single out any one to whom more than another the charge may be applied. But no; while thousands throng the Saviour, one alone toucheth Him. Jesus answered, "*Somebody* hath touched Me."

III. The test to distinguish between the one touch and the other. "Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that *virtue hath gone out of Me*." This, then, was the test; the sacred touch was proved by the outflowing of the healing virtue. There is no healing influence without faith—no true faith without healing influence. Therefore, the fact so well known to Him who is the one Source and Dispenser of grace, that such influence had gone forth from Him to this woman, was the decisive and infallible proof that she had touched Him in a way that none of the throng around her had. Thus alone

can we surely know that we have truly believed in Jesus to the saving of our souls; when it has become manifest to all men and ourselves that a saving virtue has come from Him to us, and that through that mighty virtue old things are passed away, and all things are made new.

I. BURNS, *Select Remains*, p. 46.

I. IN the case of this woman, we perceive that two things went together—an inward act of faith, and recourse to something external; both the internal and the external bearing upon Christ. She touched the hem of His garment. Our Lord in all His miracles required a susceptibility on the part of the applicant for His mercy, and an outward action as regarded Himself. He required faith on the part of the person seeking His aid; and then He touched that person, or spake certain words to him, or anointed his eyes with clay, or bade him have recourse to some action insignificant in itself. The two acts were combined, the inward and the outward; one suffered not without the other, but both went together.

II. It is not superstition, then, for faithful men to use and rely upon the ordinances of the Christian religion; there is no superstition in having recourse to actions, between which and their results there exists no discernible connection, if only those actions be either enjoined or sanctioned by God. It would not be superstitious for a man, sick of the palsy, to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, in expectation of a cure, if the Lord God had commanded him to do so, and had promised restoration to health as the reward of his obedience; but to do this, or any similar thing, without a promise, this would be superstitious. The superstitious property in an act consists not in having recourse to means, apparently inefficacious, but in having recourse to them without a sufficient warrant from reason or from revelation. It is through things external that many of the gifts and graces which we expect to realise in the Church are to pass from Christ, from whom alone the virtue emanates, to our souls. Love Christ and prove your love by keeping His commandments. But having done all, remember that, notwithstanding your love, the disease of sin is upon you, and touch the hem of His garment. Rely on Christ only for salvation, and prove that you do so, not by pleading your faith, as if faith were anything meritorious, but by permitting your faith to lead you to Christ, that you may touch the hem of His garment.

W. F. HOOK, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 242.

We have here (1) a touch incited by past failure; (2) a touch effective through faith; (3) a touch publicly acknowledged.

E. Mellor, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 1.

References: viii. 45.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 251; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281. viii. 46.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 227. viii. 47.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 45. viii. 48.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 283. viii. 49.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 31; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 184. viii. 52.—T. Gasquoine, *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 58. ix. 1-6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 253. ix. 1-11.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 99. ix. 1-48.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 150. ix. 10-17.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 291. ix. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,624. ix. 12-17.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 120.

Chap. ix., ver. 13.—"**But He said unto them, Give ye them to eat.**"

This narrative suggests and illustrates the following important principle: that men are often, and properly, put under obligation to do that for which they have, in themselves, no present ability.

I. To begin at the very lowest point of the subject: it is the nature of human strength and bodily fortitude to have an elastic measure, and to be so let forth or extended as to meet the exigencies that arise. Within certain limits, for man is limited in everything, the body gets the strength it wants in the exercise for which it is wanted. God may fitly call a given man to a course of life that requires much robustness and a high power of physical endurance, on the ground that when he is fully embarked on his calling the robustness will come, or will be developed in it and by means of it, though previously it seemed not to exist.

II. Intellectual force, too, has the same elastic quality, and measures itself in the same way, by the exigencies we are called to meet. Task it, and for that very reason, it grows efficient. Plunge it into darkness, and it makes a sphere of light. It discovers its own force by the exertion of force, measures its capacity by the difficulties it has endured, its appetite for labour by the labour it has endured. All great commanders, statesmen, lawgivers, scholars, preachers, have found the powers unfolded in their calling, and by it, which were necessary for it.

III. The same also is true, quite as remarkably, of what we sometimes call moral power. By this we mean the power of a life and a character, the power of good and great purposes, that power which comes at length to reside in a man distinguished

in some course of estimable or great conduct. No other power of man compares with this, and there is no individual who may not be measurably invested with it. Integrity, purity, goodness, success of any kind, in the humblest persons or in the lowest walks of duty, begin to invest them finally with a character, and create a certain sense of momentum in them. Other men expect them to get on because they are getting on, and bring them a repute that sets them forward, give them a salute that means —success. This kind of power is neither a natural gift nor, properly, an acquisition ; but it comes in upon one and settles on him like a crown of glory, while discharging with fidelity his duties to God and man. And here again, also, it is to be noted that the power in question, this moral power, is often suddenly enlarged by the very occasions that call for it. Not seldom is it a fact that the very difficulty and grandeur of a design, which some heroic soul has undertaken to execute, exalts him at once to such a pre-eminence of moral power that mankind are exalted with him, and inspired with energy and confidence by the contemplation of his magnificent spirit. How often, indeed, is a man able to carry a project simply because he has made it so grand a project. He strikes, inspires, calls to his aid, by virtue of his great idea, his faith, his sublime confidence in truth or justice or duty. All the simplest, most loving, and most genuine Christians of our own time are such as rest their souls, day by day, on the confidence and promise of accruing power, and make themselves responsible—not for what they have in some inherent ability, but for what they can have in their times of stress and peril, and in the continual raising of their own personal quantity and power. They throw themselves on works wholly above their ability, and get accruing power in their works for others still greater and higher. And so they grow in courage, confidence, personal volume, efficiency of every kind, and instead of slinking into their graves out of impotent lives, they lie down in the honours of heroes.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 239.

REFERENCES: ix. 18-22.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 164. ix. 20-4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 102. ix. 21. —J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 193; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 104.

Chap. ix., ver. 23.—**"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, and follow Me."**

IT is not more certain that without holiness no man can serve God than that without self-denial no man can be holy. And so

it must be, from the nature of mankind and the nature of Christ's service; for what is man's nature but sinful flesh, and what his service but a sharp corrective? No two powers can be more antagonistic than man's nature and Christ's service, and the struggle issues, as either power prevails, in apostasy or in self-denial.

I. In the first place, without crossing and denying of self there can be no purifying of the moral habits. Without a true compunction and a tender conscience, purity of heart, and the energy of a devout mind set free from the thraldom of evil, no man can have fellowship with Christ, and no man can have these without self-denial.

II. And so, again, even with those who have for a while followed Christ's call, how often do we see the fairest promise of a high and elevated life marred for want of constancy. They had no endurance, for they had no self-denial. A self-sparing temper will make a man not only an utter contradiction to his Lord, but even to himself.

III. Without self-denial there can be no real cleaving of the moral nature to the will of God. I say that, to distinguish between the passive and seeming attachment of most baptized men, and the conscious energetic grasp of will by which Christ's true disciples cleave to their Master's service.

IV. We have need to ask ourselves: (1) In what do we deny ourselves? It would be very hard for most men to find out what one thing, in all the manifold actings of their daily life, they either do or leave undone simply for Christ's sake. (2) And if we cannot find anything in which we deny ourselves already, we must needs resolve on something in which we may deny ourselves henceforward. In things lawful and innocent, and, it may be, gainful and honourable and in keeping with our lot in life; and such things as the world, by its own measure, esteems to be necessary things; we may really try ourselves: we may find matter for self-denial, and that in many ways.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 89.

WHEREIN consists the self-denial of which the text speaks? We must bound it by the prescribed path of each man's Christian duties and trials, but within that path, what is it, that we may know and practise it?

I. First of all, it must find its field and exercise in the thoughts. There let us plant it and thence trace its work on the words and actions. Whosoever will be Christ's disciple,

must deny himself in his thoughts. It is a temptation to all men, to think highly of themselves; a temptation so subtle that, even with the utmost care to prohibit and cut off its occasion, it most usually finds its seal somewhere in a man's character. What we should aim at is, that quiet reasonable abnegation of self-will and self-regard, which lays us, for all our more solemn interests and eternal prospects, passive in the hands of our Heavenly Father—as His children, cared for by Him, as much bound to believe and trust Him as to obey and serve Him; that truest humility which is content to take Him at His word and appropriate His promises; that genuine self-denial, which links our will in His, and pours life and energy and a warm loving heart, with all its fulness of conviction and affection, into the unreserved and unconditional furtherance of His work in the world and His glory in ourselves.

II. Self-denial is a wide subject indeed; one deserving every Christian's earnest and active endeavour therein to follow the example of his Saviour. The Christian's light is to strive—not that men may follow him, but that he may lead them out to meet the Bridegroom; and the voice of Him for whom we wait may be heard in the simplest remark of a child, as well as in the deepest conclusion of a philosopher.

III. Self-denial in thought and word would ill deserve the name, if they did not lead on to self-denial in deed. If any man will come after Christ, in his outward life and acts, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 32.

THE Saviour hardly ever said words whose bearing is more direct upon the practical work of our daily living; and though it is a bold thing to make the assertion, we do not hesitate to assert that no words ever uttered by Christ were ever so misunderstood and misinterpreted by very many men, in many places and in many ages. Christ's teaching was, that the earnest believer must be ready to give up anything, though it should be a right hand or eye, that tended to obstruct him in his Christian course; and that he must be ready to fulfil every Christian duty, however painful, and to bear every burden laid upon him by the hand of God, though it should press upon him heavily and sorely, as the weighty cross upon the poor criminal who bore it to the place of doom.

I. The doctrine of self-sacrifice has proved sufficient to produce many instances of the purest heroism that this world

has ever witnessed. Many a time it has gained victories, silently won, in struggling hearts, to which earthly battle-fields are nothing. The self-denial required by Jesus does not lie in seeking needless suffering for ourselves, but in bearing humbly and submissively what should come in the discharge of Christian duty. Let a man, says Jesus, deny himself, and take up *his* cross—the cross God is pleased to send him and no other. Let him bear the sorrow allotted to him in love and wisdom by the Almighty, let him not tempt the Lord by trying to take the reins of providence into his own puny hands. If we take the trials God sends us, and strive faithfully against the temptations from within and without that God permits to assail us, we shall find that we need not go out of the way to create trials for ourselves. The world, the flesh, and the great adversary are hourly seeking to mislead us, and if any man will come after Christ, he *must* deny himself and take up his cross daily.

A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, p. 268.

REFERENCES: ix. 23—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 10; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, p. 251; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 311; W. Landels, *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 8; G. S. Barrett, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 381; W. P. Roberts, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi, p. 235; R. Tuck, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 102; E. H. Higgins, *Ibid.*, p. 316. ix. 24-7.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 173. ix. 25.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 314.

Chap. ix., ver. 26.—"Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels."

FALSE Shame. Consider:—

I. What is there in Christ and His words of which men are ashamed? (1) Their reason is perplexed by the mystery of His Person; (2) their pride is humbled by the nature of His work.

II. How men may show that they are ashamed of Christ. (1) The shame of some is seen in their shrinking from the profession of His Name; (2) we can show our shame of Christ by silence and by compliance.

E. MELLOR, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 50.

IF we consider our Lord's saying on the subject of the last judgment, we shall find that there are three main failures, so to call them, for which Christians will be condemned at the day of account.

I. The first is disobedience—conscious, wilful disobedience to the Gospel law.

II. The second is that of false and outward profession.

III. The third is the failure to profess the truth of which they are secretly convinced.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,151; see also *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 369.

REFERENCE: ix. 26.—S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 31.

Chap. ix., vers. 28-31.—**"And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray," etc.**

I. THE Transfiguration throws light on the meaning of Christ's Passion. It shows that glory was His natural state, according to His own thought: "Now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own Self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

II. Evidently, one object of this scene was to confirm the faith of the disciples in the Divine Nature of a suffering Redeemer.

III. This scene bears close relation to the Resurrection. On the former occasion Christ distinctly foretells His death, in the evening retires, and at night is transfigured. Again, at the Transfiguration He had two witnesses from the world of spirits, besides His three disciples; and in His Passion an angel from the unseen world is present, and the same three disciples; while, again, at the tomb, out of the same three Apostles two are found, as well as two witnesses from the unseen world.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: ix. 28, 29.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 24; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 185. ix. 28-32.—H. N. Grimley, *Tremadoc Sermons*, p. 10. ix. 28-36.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 476; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 239; S. D. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 54; G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 272.

Chap. ix., vers. 29, 30.—**"And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering," etc.**

THE Re-appearance of the Departed.

I. The Church, perfected and triumphant; the Church, expectant still, in their quiet resting-places; and the Church travailing, conflicting here, in the battle-field of this lower world—were all one upon that holy mount. And they all gathered round the same Christ—the Friend of all, the Saviour of all, the Lord of all. He was the Spring from which all came.

He was the End to which all tended. They all combined to make His kingdom.

II. If we pass from the persons to their appearance, we are immediately baffled by the unearthliness of the scene to which we are admitted. Only three things occur to notice. (1) The Transfiguration left everything the same. It was Christ's own form; it was Christ's own face; the very garments appear to have been the same; only all—the figure, the countenance, the dress—became lovely and lustrous. And so with the two sainted ones from the other worlds—they were recognisable in a moment; and all we read of their appearance is, that they "appeared in a glory," which probably means that they were like their Lord—exceeding white and brilliant. (2) What was the character of the heavenly appearance? Twofold—partly physical, partly spiritual. Some from within, some from without. Who can doubt that that sun-like brightness was the beaming of the moral effulgence of the Divine nature, the holiness, the wisdom, the love, the power of God, all radiating there, and making that flood of glory so intense, that flesh and blood could not look upon it. (3) It is interesting to inquire, What was the subject which occupied the thoughts of that heavenly assembly, when they met in that sweet society? St. Luke only answers the question. They talked of Christ's *exodus* which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Notice the place which the sufferings, and Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus —making His exodus—held in the minds of the saints. It was their only topic. No wonder! it is the central truth of the whole system—that truth of truths, without which nothing else in the world is true indeed.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 218.

REFERENCES: ix. 29.—H. Wonnacott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 115; E. D. Solomon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 133. ix. 29-31.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 505; T. M. Herbert, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 113. ix. 29-37.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 388. ix. 30, 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 193; *Homilist*, new series, vol. i., p. 251; W. M. Taylor, *Elijah the Prophet*, p. 222. ix. 32.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 236 ix. 34.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 1; Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 359; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 273. ix 34, 35.—W. T. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 523. ix. 35.—A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 256. ix. 36.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 80. ix. 37-42.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 19. ix. 37-43—*Preacher's Monthly*. vol. iii., p. 344. ix. 38-42.—G. Macdonald, *The Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 173. ix. 42.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 100; vol. xxix., No. 1,746 ix. 45.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 232. ix. 49, 50.—Phillips Brooks,

Ibid., vol. xxxi., p. 277. ix. 49-62.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 160. ix. 53-62.—G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 131. ix. 54-6.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. vi., p. 416.

Chap. ix., vers. 55, 56.—**"But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."**

THE Spirit of Christ and of Elijah.

No one can have failed to notice the marked difference between the stern spirit of Elijah and the gentle spirit of Christ. Of all the prophets of the Old Dispensation Elijah is the grandest and least civilised. Rénan tells us that in the pictures of the Greek Church Elijah is usually represented as surrounded by the decapitated heads of the Church's enemies. And Prescott tells us that in the sixteenth century the brutal inquisitors of Spain tried to justify their fiendish deeds by appealing to Elijah's act in calling down fire from heaven, and saying, "Lo, fire is the natural punishment of heretics." They did not understand—or else they would not—that that act of Elijah's was for ever condemned by One who was at once Elijah's Master and Elijah's God.

I. Elijah and the old heroes, doubtless, had not learnt to distinguish between the sinners and the sin. Doubtless they had not learnt to love the sinner, while they hated the sin. It was reserved for after-times to teach men that. It required a higher teaching than had yet been granted to mankind. It required the teaching of the Son of God Himself. The spirit of Elijah was a spirit of justice, a spirit of righteous retribution, a spirit of terrible vengeance: the spirit of Christ was a spirit of tenderness, a spirit of compassion, a spirit of love.

II. But because the religion of Christ is a religion of love, because it bids us be kind, patient, long-suffering, forgiving, do not fancy that therefore it is a religion of sentimentalism, fit only for weak women and effeminate men. It is nothing of the kind. It is a religion of mercy, but it is a religion of justice. It is a religion of charity and of intolerance of sin. It is a religion of love, but of hatred of oppression. If any man can see injustice and wrong done to those who cannot help themselves—and see it done, too, with callousness and indifference—then that man may be very wise and prudent in the eyes of a hollow society, but he has lost the spirit of justice, which is the spirit of Christ.

J. VAUGHAN, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 147.

REFERENCES: ix. 56.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii. p. 132; H

Jones, *Ibid.*, vol. xxx., p. 101; W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 318. ix. 57.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 458. ix. 57, 58.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 244. ix. 57-62.—H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol xvi., p. 404.

Chap. ix., vers. 59, 60.—"**And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.**"

Our Lord's words in the text seem at first sight harsh and severe. They are regarded by many as breathing the very spirit of those religious movements and institutions which dissolve the nearest and most sacred ties of natural kinship and affection for the interests of the Church and for the promotion of the individual religious life.

I. But what is it that our Lord said, and under what circumstances did He say it? It is probable that the young man heard of his father's death while he was with Christ, for, if he had been in his father's house when he died the Jewish law would have pronounced him ceremonially unclean, and kept him from intercourse with others for some time. He heard of his father's death while he was with Christ, and he wanted to return to the funeral. The father was dead, and beyond the reach of his affection. The son could really do nothing for him. If he had been a good son he had already done everything for his father that it was in his power to do; if he had been a bad son it was too late now to make up for past neglect. There are scores of cases in which a clear imperative duty would require a man to be absent even from his father's funeral. If the Duke of Wellington, on the morning of the battle of Waterloo, had heard that his father was dead, and had left the army to come home to bury him, I do not know what military law would have inflicted on him, but he would have committed a great crime. There are duties which refuse to suffer a man even to go and bury his father. To such a duty this man had been called. He appears to have been selected as one of the seventy; for our Lord told him that he was to preach the kingdom of God. He might have had his purpose weakened as well as have been kept away from a great and solemn work, the opportunity for which would not occur again. His father could not suffer by his absence, and our Lord lays His hand upon him, and commands him to discharge, even in the hour of his grief, this great service. "Let the dead bury their dead."

II. Is there not something hard in the way in which our Lord remits the burial to those who had no spiritual life? Does not this look like the contempt with which many persons, claiming to be spiritual, speak of those who have no religious faith? But, certainly, that was not Christ's habit, and it was to minister to the spiritually dead that this man was called. Our Lord never spoke with contemptuous indifference of those who were dead in trespasses and sins; and it was the very eagerness of our Lord that they might rise from that spiritual death to a new and better life, that led Him to call this man away from what he was going about, and to send him to preach the Gospel. This whole narrative suggests that critical moments in a man's life bring critical duties.

R. W. DALE, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 744.

REFERENCES: ix. 59.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 554. ix. 59, 60.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 255; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 42. ix. 59-62.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 204. ix. 60.—T. Cuyler, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 65. ix. 61—H. Wonnacott, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 84; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 403. ix. 61, 62.—W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 56; H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 266. ix. 62.—A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 164; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 61. ix.—*Expositor*, 1st series, p. 148; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vi., p. 515. x. 1.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 98. x. 1-7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 160. x. 1-38.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 160. x. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32; W. Baird, *The Hallowing of Our Common Life*, p. 39. x. 3-7.—W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 85. x. 3-9.—J. Clifford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 204. x. 5, 6.—Phillips Brooks, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 322.

Chap. x., ver. 7.—"The labourer is worthy of his hire."

I. Two views may be taken of the minister of Christ as regards his personal condition in his work; and two totally different systems pursued, according as one or other of these views prevails. He may be regarded as a solitary being, who has abjured the world and its lies, and is simply and entirely bound to the office which he bears. He may be trained in strict self-denying discipline, and thus sent forth on his lonesome toil. It may be urged on the other side, that, fitted as the solitary minister may be, and has been proved, for certain portions of the work of the Church, he is by no means so fitted for her ordinary and normal requirements. The strength of a body of

solitary men is rather theological and ecclesiastical than pastoral; and the ordinary work of the Church is undoubtedly pastoral. It is in the bosom of the family, in the unwitnessed growth of thoughts and habits of faith and purity and love; in the silent progress of enlightenment and confidence and kindly feeling, that the real advance of our holy religion is to be seen in the world.

II. Whenever this has been forgotten by the Church, consequences disastrous to religion have ensued. We cannot, therefore, too carefully recall to our minds the proper work and province of our most holy faith: that it is, not to propagate a system, not to disseminate a science, not to produce a uniformity of profession, but to change men's lives; to persuade men, by the agency of our exalted Saviour and Head, who is ever with us and helping us by His Spirit, of certain living facts which, if received by them, must bring about purity and holiness and love—the reception of which cannot co-exist with a double heart and a hypocritical life. And to such an end who are the labourers? Not, in the main, the lonely student, standing aloof from society, identified in interest with an artificial organisation with which society has no sympathy. The minister of Christ who is to work on society should be himself a part of society, should stand in, and be a leader of, the same conflict in which all Christian society is engaged; whose influence will be not only precept personally illustrated, not only example in his family, but also—which is a most important element in the matter—will be extended and continued by the fact that he himself mingles in among the laity, those who have been born and fostered under his roof, and in the light of his Christian character.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 260.

REFERENCES: x. 9.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 225; F. Cooke, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 15. ix. 13-16.—W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 112. x. 17-20. *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xiv., p. 241; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 393; R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 246; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 107.

Chap. x., ver. 18.—**"And He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."**

LOOKING back upon our Earthly Life.

Throwing ourselves forward in the pure imagination of faith into the world to come, let us seek to look back and down upon this world as though we already were beyond it. Surrendering ourselves in our faith,—and with our powers of spiritual imagination lent to the aid of our faith, let us seek humbly to imitate

our Master, and look upon our world as He looked upon this earth, when as from a position in eternity He saw Satan fall from heaven.

I. If we look upon our own lives as one looks back upon a way already trodden, and a work already accomplished, we shall gain a truer sense of the proportions of things. This true sense of proportion in life is hard for us to keep in the nearness of present things; yet it is essential to large, happy living that we should gain and keep it. Whenever we shall be far enough out in eternity to look back and see our lives as one whole, we shall understand better God's grouping of events in them; we shall know then how all the while He who sees the end from the beginning, and beholds all earthly things framed in the quiet charity of heaven, has looked in the good pleasure of His love upon the history of this world, which to us in the midst of it seems often so broken, over-shadowed, and wild. And certainly the more freedom of faith we can exercise in letting our hearts sail away from the present and the near, taking in as in one view our own past, present, and future, and contemplating our life as one Divinely ordered whole of existence; the happier will our thought of life be, and the more just our estimate of what things are small or great in our lives.

II. In so far as we can put ourselves in the exercise of our own faiths beyond this life, we shall gain in many respects a different, and in all a more just, estimate of our own real attainments. We shall see more clearly what we may expect to win for ourselves from life. Here I venture to say that the training and discipline of any power in the honest work of a lifetime may be so much real attainment for immortality—so much gain carried in the man himself through death into the world of larger opportunity. A man, therefore, should perform all his labour on this earth not as though what he does now were all of it, but as an heir of immortality.

III. Only as we strive to throw ourselves forward into the life beyond, and to consider our whole existence here as it is in its relation to the man and his life then and there, can we form a safe estimate of the worths of things. Jesus Christ left no doubt as to what in the retrospect of eternity is of worth before God. It is the new heart. It is the soul born of the Spirit of God. The image of Christ in a human heart is the gain of eternal worth. N. SMYTH, *The Reality of Faith*, p. 30.

REFERENCE: x. 19-21.—W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 408.

Chap. x., ver. 20.—"**In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.**"

THE Temptations besetting a Useful Life.

I. It well shows how much we always require to obey Christ's command, to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, that even our very duties may be a snare to us; and we may be falling away from the path of life, even when we seem to others and to ourselves to be following it most steadily. This concerns all those who are engaged in promoting works of charity, and most of all, who are labouring to do good to their neighbour in the great matter of his soul, and who, therefore may be inclined to think that they are employed most securely. It concerns, too, every man who is busily and honestly engaged in his regular calling; who, living in the fear of God, is making his work a godly service; and who, doing good in his generation, is setting forward the kingdom of Christ; and is, so far, casting out devils in his Master's Name. Let us see, then, what it is that the spirit of Christ's words recommends to us.

II. We are so formed that we cannot even work in the most useful calling long together without finding our spiritual state go backwards, unless we often go to Christ, the Fountain of life, and refresh ourselves with His Spirit. Let us treat as one of the devil's worst snares the temptation which we may feel to trust in our own useful lives and virtuous feelings, and, therefore, to neglect coming to God; that is, to neglect the only means of knowing ourselves thoroughly, and thus of obtaining a cure for every weakness of our souls, and a guard to save us from falling away, through the Spirit of Christ our Saviour. Christ Himself, whose day was spent in active usefulness, was accustomed to rise long before it was day, that He might commence with His Heavenly Father. In this, as in all the rest of His life, He was our Example that we should follow His steps: and if He, to whom the Spirit was given without measure, did not neglect the means of gaining fresh spiritual strength by prayer and devout meditation, how can we neglect it, without being certain that we shall suffer for our presumption?

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 264.

REFERENCES: x. 20.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, iv., vol p. 414; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,321; M. Simpson, *Sermons*, p. 257; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 174.

Chap. x., ver. 21.—**"In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank Thee, O Father," etc.**

BOTH in substance and in circumstances these words are unusually profound, even among the profound sayings of our Lord.

I. First, they mark the almost solitary exception to the pervading gravity, not to say sorrowfulness, of His demeanour and life. In prophetic anticipation He looked onward to the final triumph, when the processes of His salvation should be completed, when the moral influences of His Cross should subdue men's hearts, and He, the Crucified, should "draw all men unto Him." And to the spiritual Jesus there was in this an unutterable satisfaction. Breakings in of millennial glory would irradiate His sorrow, so touchingly indicated by this one solitary record of His joy.

II. The occasion which elicited this expression of spiritual joy from our Lord is also very remarkable. The lower adulterated joy of the Seventy suggests to our Lord a higher and purer spiritual joy. Their miracle over the external phenomena of demoniacal possession suggests afresh to their Lord His spiritual triumph over the moral power of evil. "You," He says, "see the devils subject to you: I see Satan as lightning fall from heaven." "In that hour" He began to see the "travail of His soul." He first realised the spiritual satisfaction that was to comfort and sustain Him amid outward discouragement, rejection, and infliction.

III. It is worthy of notice that our Lord's most piercing spiritual visions, and His most profound words of spiritual wisdom occur in connection with His acts of devotion. More than once our Lord permitted His disciples to overhear His communings with His Father. His prayers are ever the utterances of His greatest thoughts, of His deepest feelings.

IV. The sentiment itself is one of the many expressions of the great Christian paradox—that the kingdom of God is accessible, not to men of great intellectual power, *as such*, but to men of childlike hearts.

H. ALLON, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 326.

THE Simplicity of Mystery.

I. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit." What hour was that? When He saw, humanly speaking, a glimpse of God's method of unfolding His governmental purposes, and His beneficent plans and designs. It is always so. Now and then God seems to lift the veil, and we are allowed for one moment

to see *what* He is doing, and *how* He is doing things; and I have never yet had one of these revelation glimpses without saying afterwards, "This is Divine; this is sufficient; this is infinite in beauty. God is doing all things well."

II. Religion, as propounded to us by Jesus Christ, is not a riddle to be solved by the intellectually great. It is a revelation to the heart; it is a word spoken to sin; it is a Gospel breathed upon sorrow; it is a word of liberty delivered to those that are bound, a subtle sympathy, something not to be named in high-sounding phrases, or to be wrought out in pomp of words. "And hast revealed them unto babes." It will be found that simplicity itself is the chief mystery of God. The fact of the matter is, that things are so simple that we will not believe them. We look for mystery, and therefore we miss the thing that is close at hand. The notion of the day would seem to be the notion of intellectual power, intellectual efficiency, intellectual culture. If we are babes what may we expect from the world? Ridicule. Let us understand the terms under which we go into this kingdom, and that is, that we return to babyhood. The greater the man, the greater the simplicity; the greater his acquisitions, the more beautiful his modesty; the more wonderful his power and influence, the greater his readiness to consider, and oblige, and do good. From the greatest expect the best; from the master more than from the servant; from the disciple expect rudeness and rejection; from the Master "Forbid them not, let them come." As thou dost increase in gentleness, thou wilt increase in modesty, and the increase of thy manfulness and valour shall be an increase of gentleness, and thou shalt find thy highest joys in succouring many, in blessing all. PARKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 72.

REFERENCES: x. 21.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 265; *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 206; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii, p. 222; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 85. x. 21, 22.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,571; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 421. x. 22.—W. Dorling, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 142.

Chap. x., vers. 23, 24.—**"And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes, which see the things that ye see," etc.**

THE Sights and Sounds of Christendom.

I. Our Lord's words suggest the solemnity, the blessedness, of living at a great epoch in human affairs.

II. They also suggest a characteristic of His religion. That which is spiritual and moral, though it be not outwardly striking

is permanent, while that which is merely material, whatever be its magnificence, sooner or later, is surely condemned to perish or be transformed.

III. Why were the eyes that saw and the ears that heard Christ so pre-eminently blessed? Christ's attitude towards men is justifiable only and solely because He is Divine—Divine, not in the sense in which all good men are Divine, in that they are gifted by the good God with some rays of His moral perfections; but Divine in the absolute sense of having shared from all eternity in the uncreated life of Deity, so that in Him a Divine Substance became historically incarnate, or, as St. Paul expresses it, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 452.

REFERENCES: x. 23.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 1st series, p. 28; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 16:; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part ii., p. 12. x. 23, 24.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 215; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 41. x. 23, 37.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 348; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 85. x. 24-6.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 169.

Chap. x., ver. 25.—**"And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"**

I. THE lawyer knew the answer at the time when he asked the question. He said, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" and all the time the answer was in his own recollection, had he but known it. Alas! we do not always turn our knowledge into wisdom. We know the fact and we hardly ever sublimate the fact into truth. We know the law, and we fail to see that under the law there is the beauty and there is the grace of the Gospel.

II. "This do," said Jesus, "and thou shalt live." What had the lawyer to do? To love the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and strength and mind. Love is life. Only he who loves lives. Only love can get out of a man the deepest secrets of his being, and develop the latent energies of his nature, and call him up to the highest possibility of his manhood. The end of the commandment is charity; the summing-up of all true law is love.

III. "But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" It is precisely there that every man has a great battle to fight—namely, at the point of self-justification. So long as there is any disposition in us to

justify ourselves we are unprepared to receive the Gospel. One of the first conditions required of us at the Cross is self-renunciation.

IV. Jesus asked the man certain questions which he answered rightly, and those answers were returned to him as a response to his own enquiries. This ought to have a very serious application to ourselves, because we are to be no longer self-deluded by the impression that if more was said to us we should do more; if we had a better minister we should soon have higher knowledge of truth and keener perception of moral beauty. Jesus Christ showed in this case that all the while there was in the man's heart the very answer which he professed himself eager to ascertain. So it is with ourselves. We know the right; yet oftentimes the wrong pursue. There is in our hearts and minds information enough upon these great questions, if so be we are minded to turn that information to account. PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. iii., p. 85.

Chap. x., vers. 25-37.

THE Good Samaritan.

I. It is clear that the kindness of this man was of the spirit, and not merely of the letter. Here was one main point of difference between him and the priest and Levite. They needed a specific injunction, but he wanted to carry out a great principle.

II. We may perceive that this man's benevolence was not hindered by any prejudices of nationality or religion. The injured traveller was an entire stranger to him, but he did not say within himself on that account, "He has no claim upon me." He was, besides, a Jew, and the feud between his people and the Samaritans, because it was a religious one, between people that were neighbours and agreed in certain points while they differed on others, was exceedingly bitter; yet he did not exclaim "Let him die, for all I care!" No, he was a man in great straits, and all other things were forgotten by him in the presence of these two. Now, here we are furnished with a test as to the genuineness of our neighbour love; and by its application we may discover that our benevolence is often chilled, if not—indeed, absolutely killed—by some prevalent influences. These may be described as caste, denominationalism, and a certain prudishness which we may call purism.

III. It is obvious that this man's benevolence was not hindered by any considerations of personal convenience.

IV. It is evident that this man's benevolence took its form from the nature of the misery which he sought to relieve.

V. If our benevolence would be of the highest order we must exercise it out of regard to Him who died to show mercy to ourselves. Thus our humanity will rise into Christianity, and our benevolence will be baptized into the Name of the Lord Jesus.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 226.

REFERENCES: x. 25.—F. W. Farrar, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 189. x. 25-7.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 244. x. 25-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 151; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 171. x. 25-37.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 542; *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 328; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 310; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,360; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 175; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 342; Parker, *Wednesday Evenings in Cavendish Chapel*, p. 98. x. 26.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 145; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 203. x. 27.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 145; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 371. x. 29.—M. Walrond, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 205. x. 29-37.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 256.

Chap. x., vers. 33, 34.

BETWEEN Jerusalem and Jericho.

I. A certain man fell among thieves; here is the black margin which surrounds civilised society. It is, perhaps, only a man here or there who may actually fall amongst thieves; but it is from individual men that we learn the true condition of the society that lies beyond us. There is a boundary beyond which if a man step he will pass into the most aggravated form of barbarism.

II. There came down a priest that way, as also a Levite and a Samaritan; so the escape of some is not to be taken as a condemnation of others. All the four men went down the same road, yet only one of them was unfortunate. You have passed safely down the roads of business, sociality, affliction; do not turn your escape into a whip with which to scourge less fortunate men.

III. The priest passed by on the other side, so did the Levite. The thing which is always being done by a negative and do-nothing respectability. There are two sides in life; (1) the side on which men are dying, and (2) the other side. We can choose our side. On the first side we shall find (1) something to shock our sensibilities; (2) something to interrupt our

speed; (3) something to tax our resources. On the opposite side we shall find a clear path to infamy and the hell of eternal remorse.

IV. The priest passed by and so did the Levite—so sacred names are no guarantee for sacred services. It is a terrible thing for the nature to fall below the name.

V. But a certain Samaritan had compassion on him – there are unexpected sources of help in life. This reflection is of the greatest practical value as showing (1) that we all need help; (2) as protecting men from despair; (3) as showing that we ourselves may become the unexpected helpers of others. The Christian application of this study is obvious. (1) Life is a perilous journey. (2) Lost men will never be saved by formal piety. (3) The true Helper is the very Being whom we have offended. The Teacher of this parable is the Exemplar of its beneficent doctrine. The teacher should always be the explanation of his own lesson.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. ii., p. 25.

REFERENCES: x. 33, 34.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 26; C. Kingsley, *Discipline and Other Sermons*, p. 154; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iv., p. 177. x. 34.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 41.

Chap. x. ver. 35.—"Take care of him, and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

I. ALL Christians should regard each himself as the host, to whom the good Samaritan brought the poor man, and should order his way to his poor brethren accordingly. We shall do so if we will but trust in our Lord, the great King of heaven and earth, as we trust in one another on common occasions. You know what credit means, when people are transacting business. A man who is known, or believed, to have plenty of money takes out goods, or uses a man's work, to a certain amount, and the workman, or owner of the goods, allows him to do so without making him pay for it at the time. Why? Because he has credit in him; he believes that the other has wherewithal to pay, and thinks himself quite certain to have his money after a time. Now, this credit which we give one another in trade and bargains is really a kind of faith, a type and shadow of the faith which pleases God and brings Christians to heaven. The faith which pleases God is when we have such entire trust in what He tells us, that we act as if we saw and felt it, though it is out of sight and beyond experience. Thus the good Samaritan

required the master of the inn to have faith in him, to wait on the sick man, and to lay out money on him, fully expecting to be paid by-and-bye.

II. Our good Lord might have required of us to wait upon our brother out of mere gratitude, without promising any reward to us, but it hath pleased Him to promise a reward. Suppose that host in the parable had himself been a traveller before, and had been robbed and wounded and relieved and cared for by the very same Samaritan, he would hardly have needed the encouragement of a promise, "I will repay thee," to make him kind to this new traveller; and so much the more bountiful would he think it, when his gracious Lord vouchsafed to encourage him. Now this is just our case.

III. Mark another instance of overflowing bounty. He accompanies his aid with a gift. The Samaritan took out two pence and gave to the host, saying, "Take care of him." Ancient writers say that these two pence mean the two great laws of charity; to love God with all your heart and your neighbour as yourself. They are God's treasures with which He furnishes us, pouring the true love of Him and of our neighbour into our hearts by His Holy Spirit. Let us, then, grudge nothing that we can do or suffer, either for our Saviour or for His members. He that shall walk most courageously by this rule will surely find at the last that he has been most of all bountiful to himself.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part ii., p. 21.

REFERENCE: x. 35.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 255.

Chap. x., vers. 36, 37.

WE may learn from this parable—

I. That religious profession and service have no necessary connection with real goodness.

II. That neighbourhood is not cancelled by a difference of religion.

III. That true neighbourliness involves the spirit of sacrifice.

E. MILLER, *The Hem of Christ's Garment*, p. 177.

REFERENCES: x. 36, 37.—W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 40; J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 140; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., pp. 32, 273. x. 37.—C Girdlestone, *A Course of Sermons*, vol. i., p. 291; R. Flint, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 228. x. 38, 39.—T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 41. x. 38-42.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii.,

p. 183; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 230; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 172; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 927; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 36; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 215. x. 39.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 98. x. 40.—*Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 24; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 421.

Chap. x., vers. 41, 42

THE Good Part of Mary.

I. It would appear from this incident, on our Saviour's own authority, that there are two ways of serving Him—by active business and by quiet adoration. Not as if His words implied that any Christians were called to nothing but religious worship, or any to nothing but active employment. Still, after all, there are two classes of Christians: those who are like Martha, and those like Mary; and both of them glorify Him in their own line, whether of labour or of quiet, in either case proving themselves to be not their own, but bought with a price, set on obeying, and constant in obeying His will. If they labour it is for His sake; and if they adore it is still from love of Him. And further, these two classes of disciples do not choose for themselves their course of service, but are allotted it by Him. The necessity of getting a livelihood, the calls of a family, the duties of station and office, these are God's tokens, tracing out Martha's path for the many. Notice, then, who may be considered as called to the more favoured portion of Mary. (1) The old, as is material, whose season of business is past, and who seem to be thereby reminded to serve God by prayer and contemplation. (2) Those who minister at the altar are included in Mary's portion. (3) Children are in some respects partakers of Mary's portion. Till they go out into the world, whether into its trades or its professions, their school-time should be in some sort a contemplation of their Lord and Saviour. (4) We are told on St. Paul's authority, that Mary's portion is allotted more or less to the unmarried. (5) In Mary's portion are included the souls of those who have lived and died in the faith and fear of Christ.

II. Mary's portion is the better of the two. Martha's portion was full of snares, as being one of worldly labour, but Mary could not easily go wrong in hers; we may be busy in a wrong way, we cannot easily adore Him except in a right one. To serve God in prayer and praise continually, when we can do so consistently with other duties, is the pursuit of the one thing

needful, and emphatically that good thing which shall not be taken away from us.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 318.

THE One Thing Needful.

These words imply that in order to constitute human happiness two things are essential.

I. That there must be one predominating interest in the life, not a multiplicity of interests, swaying the mind by turns. "Thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful."

II. That this predominating interest must not be of a transient nature, must have reference not to time, but to eternity; "Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

E. M. GOULBURN, *Sermons in the Parish Church of Holywell*, p. 291.

REFERENCES: x. 41.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 101. x. 41, 42.—M. R. Vincent, *God and Bread*, p. 39; T. J. Crawford, *The Preaching of the Cross*, p. 255; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 350; C. Girdlestone, *Twenty Parochial Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 85; W. Gresley, *Practical Sermons*, p. 341; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 196. x. 42.—A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 324; G. Calthrop, *Words spoken to My Friends*, p. 61; S. Cox, *The Bird's Nest*, p. 113; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 156; W. P. Lockhart, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 408; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 287; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1,015. x. 47.—H. D. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 186.

Chap. xi., ver. 1.—"And it came to pass, that, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, one of His disciples said unto Him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples."

I. OUR Lord seems to have undertaken no great work without earnest prayer for God's guidance. If we undertook everything in this spirit we should have more success, and more happiness in our success than we have. And it was not merely when He had some special boon to ask that our Saviour prayed; to pray was with Him something more than merely asking for favours—it was to worship and adore the Father, to rise in spirit from the world, and above all bodily cares and wants, and join in spirit that glorious company of angels and Cherubim and Seraphim,

who ever live in the light of God's countenance, and cry, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God.

II. Consider some general features which ought to belong to prayer, according to our Lord. (1) Christ warned His disciples against the Pharisees; whomsoever they imitated, it must not be those hollow professors with their high pretence and rotten hearts: it must not be those who sought the praise of men, and thought little of the praise of Him who seeth in secret. Any man follows the example of these hypocrites who comes to the house of prayer with any hollow purpose. (2) For the matter of prayer, I will only allude to that advice of our Saviour's, where He says "Use not vain repetitions." It is chiefly to guard against this danger that the Church has ever used fixed forms of prayer, that no prayers may be offered which are unworthy of God. (3) Again, our Lord taught us that though we are to pray reverently, yet we are to pray earnestly, as those who will take no denial. He spoke the parable of the widow applying to the unjust judge, and who obtained her suit by her constancy, to show us how we ought to pray; and He promises that those things which we ask in faith we certainly shall have. Wherefore it appears that the Spirit which God approves is that of earnestness and perseverance; He does not love coldness and lukewarmness; He loves genuine heartfelt zeal which is ever praying to Him for increased blessings, and ever pressing on, and never satisfied with what has been given, but desiring more abundant supplies.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 1.

FORMS of Prayer.

I. That liturgies were of Divine appointment under the Jewish dispensation there can be no question. The songs of Moses and Miriam, and the titles prefixed to a large number in the Book of Psalms, bear evidence of being composed for congregational use. Besides, through the writings of Josephus and other Hebrew historians, no inconsiderable part of the ancient Jewish liturgies have been preserved to us, and a remarkable coincidence has been discovered between the order and method of these early compositions with our own Book of Common Prayer. Unsafe as it might be, as a rule, to base an argument on the silence of Scripture, yet we can hardly suppose that if our Lord had intended that in such an important particular the Christian worship was to differ from the Jewish, He would not have told His disciples so plainly, rather than

just join in such pre-composed devotions Himself, and then institute a form, which from being expressed throughout in the plural number, must have been intended for public and social use.

II. Note some objections to prepared forms of private prayer, however spiritual and excellent they may be, if they be used exclusively. (1) It is obvious we are thereby confined in regard to the matter of our prayers; we restrict our conversation with Heaven to a fixed routine of subjects, and preclude the mention of those hourly spiritual experiences which, though unseen, and unknown to the world, make up the great incidents of the soul's life, and may give, day by day, a new complexion to its prayers. (2) Again, there is a danger lest the exclusive use of forms should have a tendency to deaden the spirit of prayer. It is a question to be entertained calmly, whether the heart be not kept closer to its work when it has to search out of its own experiences and its own feelings the materials of its sacrifice, than when in the prepared human composition the fire and the wood are laid ready to its hand. Words, we know, are but outward things. Words are but the priest's censer which, whether it be made of gold or of clay, affects not the fragrance of the incense, nor the height to which the cloud ascends. In the estimates of Heaven the tongue of the eloquent, and the lips of the stammering, have a common value, and both are only so far regarded by God as they proceed from an honest heart—as they discover a lowly spirit, as they evidence a strength of faith, as they bespeak an earnest longing for the approval and regards of Heaven.

D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,199.

FORMS of Private Prayer—the Uses of them.

I. Let us bear in mind the precept of the wise man: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God." Prayers framed at the moment are likely to be irreverent. To avoid the irreverence of many or unfit words and rude, half-religious thoughts, it is necessary to pray from book or memory, and not at random.

II. Forms of prayer are necessary to guard us against the irreverence of wandering thoughts. If we pray without set words (read or remembered), our minds will stray from the subject; other thoughts will cross us, and we shall pursue them; we shall lose sight of His Presence whom we are addressing. This wandering of mind is in good measure prevented, under God's blessing, by forms of prayer.

III. Next, they are useful as securing us from the irreverence of excited thoughts. If we are encouraging with us an excitement, an unceasing rush and alternation of feelings, and think that this, and this only, is being in earnest in religion, we are harming our minds, and even grieving the peaceful Spirit of God, who would silently and tranquilly work His Divine work in our hearts. This, then, is an especial use of forms of prayer. When we are in earnest, as we ought always to be: viz., to keep us from self-willed earnestness, to still emotion, to calm us, to remind us what and where we are, to lead us to a purer and serener temper, and to that deep unruffled love of God and man, in which is really the fulfilling of the law, and the perfection of human nature.

IV. Forms are necessary to help our memory, and to set before us at once, completely, and in order, what we have to pray for.

V. How short are the seasons which most men have to give to prayer. Before they can collect their memories and minds their leisure is almost over, even if they have the power to dismiss the thoughts of this world, which just before engaged them. Now forms of prayer do this for them. They keep the ground occupied, that Satan may not encroach upon the seasons of devotion.

VI. The Forms of the Church have ever served her children, both to restrain them in their career of sin, and to supply them with ready utterance on their repentance.

VII. Let us recollect for how long a period our prayers have been the standard forms of devotion in the Church of Christ, and we shall gain a fresh reason for loving them, and a fresh source of comfort in using them. They have become sacred from the memory of saints departed who have used them, and whom we hope one day to meet in heaven.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 257.

REFERENCES: xi. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 336; W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 220; A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 1; A. Maclaren, *Weekday Evening Addresses*, p. 19; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p 308. xi. 1-13.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 51.

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"He said unto them, When ye pray, say Our Father which art in heaven."

THE Address of the Lord's Prayer.

I. This name by which we are commanded to call upon God

is one of the most remarkable things in the whole prayer. There are the seeds of it, indeed, in the Old Testament, just as there are seeds of the other truths of the Gospel. Yet, even in those passages of the Old Testament, in which God bears that name, it is rather as the Father of the Jewish people. To fix upon that tender name, to choose it out from all God's other greater titles, and to appoint it as the special name by which Almighty God is to be addressed by all His sinful creatures, this was Christ's doing; this privilege we owe to Him.

II. Every privilege has its corresponding duty. Every gift is a talent and a trust, for which we are to make God a return. Let us consider, therefore, what duties the privilege, which Christ has bought for us, of calling God our Father brings with it. (1) The first and chief duty is the behaving to Him as children should behave to their father. If we are aware how great a privilege it is to call God Father, let us prove our sense of it by using it diligently. You need not be afraid of using it too often. Pray as often as ever you will; you cannot weary God with your petitions. To the prayer of the dutiful and godly heart His ear is ever open. (2) The knowledge that our Father is in heaven, and can do whatsoever He pleases, should fill us with faith and a courageous trust in Him. Moreover it should raise our thoughts to heaven, and lead us to think of it and to love it as our home. Though we have never seen heaven, yet we know enough of it from Scripture to enable us to think of it, till our hearts kindle at the thought into an active desire of going thither. We know that heaven is our home, the place we ought to be journeying to, the city of our destination, where our happiness is to consist in seeing our Father, and gazing on Him till we become like Him.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 396.

I. THE form of address, "Our Father," is remarkable, because it was not the ordinary form of address before Christ came. The idea of a Father is not put forward in the Old Testament as the great all-comprehending idea of God, as it is in the New Testament. For I consider that this is emphatically the character under which God is revealed to us through Christ, namely, that of a Father. Consider (1) what is the meaning and extent of the privilege. We poor sinners, fallen from our first estate, can have no right to call God our Father. Yet our Saviour, when He taught us to pray, bade us say, "Our Father, which art in heaven." Therefore we may come as children, for

Christ has given us leave; and I conclude from this permission that the chasm between God and us has been bridged over, that the wound of sin has been healed, that forgiveness of sin is possible, even from a just and jealous God. (2) The way in which we become possessed of this privilege. It was through the sufferings and death of Christ. When, therefore, you use the words of the Lord's Prayer, and say "Our Father," bear in mind how it has come about that you have been permitted to use these words; by using them you claim the benefits of Christ's Passion, you address God by a name which Christ, who taught you to use it, purchased with His own blood.

II. "Which art in heaven." The intention of these words is: (1) To impress upon our minds the exceeding majesty of God, and our own smallness as compared with Him; (2) to remind us of God's power, that we are praying to Him who is able to grant our requests, because He is the great God who governs all things, who by His words created the heavens, and who, by His power, sustains all things which He has made.

III. The address of the Lord's Prayer is to *our* Father. Thus the prayer is to the Father, not of me or you only, but of all Christian people; and so the Lord's Prayer is a witness to the communion which ought to exist between the members of the Christian Church. Thus the Lord's Prayer brings before us our position as members of a body: it is the voice of a member of the Church, of one bound to his fellows by infinite mysterious ties, of one praying not for himself alone, but bearing upon his heart before God all those who are members of the same mystical body with himself.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 19

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"**Hallowed be Thy Name.**"

HE is the best man, the most holy man, the most Christian man, who can use, with the greatest earnestness, these words. For he who would forsake sin and follow holiness, and who would avoid hell and obtain heaven, must have something higher before his eyes than merely his own advantage. The great all-sufficient motive with the full-grown Christian is the glory of God. It is the highest wisdom, as it is the most Christian act, to pray, first of all, that the Name of God may be honoured as it ought to be honoured, and hallowed in the hearts and lives of all men.

I. Think first of the Name of God. The Name of God is spoken of in the Old Testament in a manner calculated to excite

the very deepest awe, and the most intense fear of polluting it. As in the case of the Israelites so in all others, the honour of His own most holy Name is the end of all the works of God. And as the glory of God is the guide of His own acts, so that same glory ought to be the end of all that His creatures do; whether they be angels or men, all who have gift of an intelligent soul are bound to make the glory of God the end of all they do.

II. Consider how a person ought to act who wishes to live up to His prayer, that God's Name may be hallowed. (1) A man does not hallow the Name of God who does not speak o Him most reverently. (2) The man who could hallow the Name of God should be very diligent in publicly worshipping Him; he who is diligent in attending on the public worship of God thereby honours God Himself. (3) Every man who would hallow the Name of God should so manage his whole walk in life, so conduct himself in business, in his work, in whatever he has to do, that it may be clear to all men that the honour of God is the rule of His actions. Christ our Lord said that His disciples ought so to act that men should see their good works, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 37.

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"Thy kingdom come."

I. WHAT is this kingdom of which, in the Lord's Prayer, we pray that it may come? The kingdom which John the Baptist spoke of as being at hand implied a great change in God's government of the world, somewhat in accordance with those words of St. Paul, when he says, speaking of heathen times, "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." I should conceive, therefore, that, in one sense, the kingdom of God came upon earth with the coming of Christ, because with His coming a new order of things, in some measure, began. God began to show His power, and to influence the world by His Spirit more than He had before.

II. The kingdom of God may also mean the progress of the Church in the world. There is sufficient reason why we should still pray as of old, "Thy kingdom come;" there are, indeed, vast portions of the earth which are not even professedly members of the kingdom. And there are other gods who have part in Christ's kingdom in this Christian land, and who have a strong

hold on these subjects, the flesh, the devil, covetousness, pride, sloth, intemperance. We have yet need to pray that amongst us the Kingdom of God may come.

III. A man who prays that the kingdom of God may come, prays—and if he prays he ought to have it in his heart to wish—that all men and all things may be governed by the laws of Christ, that everything contrary to the spirit of the Gospel may be banished from the world, that all bitterness, malice, evil-speaking, lying, slandering, may be utterly abolished, that all loving of pleasure, rather than loving of God, may be a thing unknown, that all worship of mammon—that is, pursuit of gain only for gain's sake, may cease, that the Cross of Christ may be in reality the standard by which men measure all things else, that all things in this world may be judged of, not by any partial distorted standard of our own, but by rules such as Christ would approve. The coming of Christ's kingdom implies all this, and a man is not honest who prays for the coming of that kingdom, and is not ready to accept such a result as this, as the answer to his prayers.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 55.

Chap. xi., ver. 2.—"**Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth.**"

I. How is God's will done in heaven? (1) God's will is in heaven done willingly or heartily; that is, His servants there obey Him and do His will, not because they are commanded to do this and that, and *dare* not disobey, but because they do not wish to disobey; it is their happiness to do God's will, it is because they do it that they are happy, and they would grieve if they might not do it. (2) Again, God's will is done in heaven completely, perfectly; whatever is done is His will throughout, with no mixture of the will of any other; unlike earth, where the very best of things have generally, perhaps always, some mixture of evil. (3) Once more, the doing of the will of God in heaven is not only willing and complete, but it is universal; there is no division between those who serve God and those who serve Him not, because *all* serve Him.

II. The prayer, "Thy will be done," implies a complete surrender of self to the will of God, a desire to do the will of God, and that the will of God may be done whatever it may cost ourselves; a desire that the honour of God and not self may be the rule of action of all men, ourselves included; that the idols which now are worshipped and which are all in some

way images of the great world idol, Self, may be utterly abolished, and that in place of them one God only may be worshipped, and that all (ourselves among them) may think nothing good and great but what tends to His glory, nothing contemptible and mean but what opposes His will, and is displeasing in His sight.

III. If we really desire to do God's will He will enable us to do it. There is no situation in life in which we may not do His will; in the ordinary path of life, in that life of labour to which God has appointed us all, there are abundant opportunities of putting in practice this rule, of doing God's will and not our own, except so far as our own agrees with His, and though it may be difficult to expel all selfish feelings and all rebellious wishes, yet constant efforts will be blessed, and we shall "grow in grace."

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 73.

REFERENCES: xi. 2.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 222; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, pp. 408, 418, 431; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, pp. 246, 276; E. Thring, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 195; H. N. Grimley, *The Prayer of Humanity*, pp. 12, 22, 31, 40, 50, 61, 74, 88: C. Stanford, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 1, 29, 53, 85, 112, 130.

Chap. xi., ver. 3.—"Give us day by day our daily bread."

I. DEPENDENCE and not independence is the true condition of man; dependence upon God for all things—things bodily, things spiritual. Men are not very ready in general to allow this, at least are not ready to recognise it in the only way which is of any value; that is, in their practice, in their everyday life. Men are ever ready to make their plans and their schemes as boldly as though they were masters of their own lives, and as though they lived by some inward independent energy of their own, and did not draw their breath and move their limbs, and eat and drink, and lie down and rise up again, by the power of God. The spirit of the text is that of entire dependence upon God. They acknowledge the Source from which all things come to us, for if even our daily bread is a gift of God, much more must all other blessings which are not so common as daily bread, and they acknowledge this also, that our dependence is from day to day—that is, constantly; that the gifts of to-day are no guarantee for the gifts of to-morrow, but that we must be daily askers if we would daily have. You will see, therefore, that there is something in the petition of the text much more

than a mere petition for food; it acknowledges a principle, it asks in spirit not for bread only, but for all bodily necessaries, all that we can want from day to day for the support and health of our bodies.

II. What lessons, then, do we learn from the prayer of the text? (1) We learn a lesson of reliance on God's providence. (2) A lesson on Christian simplicity; we pray for bread, and bread only according to our wants. (3) A lesson on the gratitude which is due to God for all His manifold favours to us. For if we pray for daily bread for the time to come, doubtless we must in our hearts give thanks for that which we have already received; and, indeed, thankfulness is a great mark of true earnest religion. (4) As we pray, labour, and are thankful for our daily bread, ten thousand times more ought we to pray, labour for, and be thankful for the bread of eternal life.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, p. 90.

REFERENCES: xi. 3.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 97; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 442; C. Stanford, *The Lord's Prayer*, p. 156; H. N. Grimley, *The Prayer of Humanity*, p. 103.

Chap. xi., ver. 4.—"Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

I. THE mischief of sin is its universality; it is everywhere, different parts of the world have different products, and men have different characters in different quarters of the world, and different manners and customs, and different colours, but in this one thing they all agree, that sin has tainted them all. And it does not confine itself to any particular age; as soon as a child can walk and speak it is made quite clear that the root of sin is in it, that it only requires favourable circumstances and it will spring up and flourish.

II. And here is the key to the fallen state of our nature; it is this sinfulness which runs through all our acts, except those which are done by the help of God's Holy Spirit, which renders our condition so deplorable. Sin hath separated us from God; betwixt Him and us there is a great gulf; our wills are not the same; we do not naturally love what He loves, and hate what He hates; we have lost by Adam's transgression our union with God, we have lost our life in Him; but we have not lost our wills, we have still free wills given us by Almighty God, and have still the heart aspiring to God, though a body of flesh inclining us to sin; we have still the power of shaking the

fetters which sin has riveted upon us, and wishing ourselves free, and exulting in the hope of liberty.

III. Sin is a thing which must be punished; it may seem a mysterious thing that God cannot forgive sins, but He cannot—that is, He cannot except through our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are to get rid of our sins we must consider what is to be done on God's part and what on our own. (1) In the first place, we must repent of our sins; repentance must go before forgiveness. (2) And then there must be determination to amend and to forsake sin; it will not do for us to repent of our sins, and then go and do the like again. (3) Our Lord will not allow us to pray for pardon except under certain conditions; namely, that we give pardon ourselves. A man who does not forgive others cannot be forgiven himself, and therefore is not permitted to pray for forgiveness. We need not deceive ourselves by fancying we can obtain pardon of God, so long as there remains an injury unforgiven by us, or any injury that we have done and have not made amends for; we shall only receive the portion of the hypocrites if we approach Almighty God with a prayer for pardon on our lips, and have unforgiveness towards any in our hearts.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 108.

Chap. xi., ver. 4.—**"Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil."**

I. SOME may say that if temptation is the lot of all men we ought not to pray as in the text: "Lead us not into temptation." This does not follow; sickness is the lot of our race, and yet we pray to God for health, and God will send it to us so far as He sees it to be good for us; indeed we may pray for all things if we use the proviso which our Saviour added to His prayer: "Nevertheless, not my will but Thine be done;" and thus we may pray against temptation because it is a dangerous thing and a thing painful to endure, even though we should come off victorious in the end. But, after all, I conceive the spirit of the prayer against temptation is to pray quite as much for grace to withstand temptation as for freedom from it, quite as much for strength when temptation comes as for the happiness of its not coming at all.

II. There is one practical piece of advice which belongs to this subject, which I may give here. When you use the Lord's Prayer, you pray that you may not be led into temptation, and

inasmuch as the flesh is weak, however willing the spirit may be, you do rightly so to pray; but you must remember that you must act consistently with this prayer; that is, if you pray that you may not be led into temptation, you must take care that you do not go into it of your own accord: it is impossible that your prayers can be answered if you do not do what you can towards obtaining an answer to them.

II. This life of ours is a warfare and not a time of rest; rest belongs to the next world, where the evil one may not enter, but to this belongs continual battle and alarm, and it behoves us to be clad in the whole armour of God. He is a Christian of the true stamp who not only prays "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," but who bears this prayer about with him as the motto of his life, and who feels that as it has pleased God to place him in a world where he is liable to temptation, so it is his duty to be continually on his guard to resist temptation; and that as there is in this world an evil one, whose constant aim it is to become his master, and usurp that place which of right belongs to Christ, so it is to be the business of his life ever to fight against this enemy of his soul, and to see that his heart is a pure and undefiled temple, worthy in some degree, at least, of the presence of Christ's Holy Spirit.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 143.

REFERENCES: xi. 4.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 40; A. W. Hare, *The Alton Sermons*, pp. 456, 471; C. Stanford, *The Lord's Prayer*, pp. 179, 203, 229; H. N. Grimley, *The Prayer of Humanity*, pp. 113, 138, 156, 169, 178. xi. 5-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 341; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 349; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 330; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 133; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 144. xi. 5-10.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 318.

Chap. xi., vers. 6-13.

THE Friend at Midnight.

I. The success of prayer is conditioned by the character of the suppliant. Not every kind of asking is acceptable prayer. That which men desire simply for the gratification of malice, or the pampering of appetite, or the satisfying of ambition, or the aggrandising of selfishness, God has nowhere promised to bestow; and unless there be in us the spirit to subordinate everything to the honour of Jehovah, we have no warrant to expect an answer.

II. That which we ask must be in accordance with God's will. Beneath every genuine supplication there is the spirit of

resignation breathed by Jesus Himself in His Gethsemane anguish, "not as I will, but as Thou wilt." God is no mere blind indulgent Father, who gives His children everything they ask. He is wise and kind, and has, withal, the discrimination of omniscience; so He gives only that which will be best; and if we were to view the matter rightly, we should see as much reason to be thankful to Him for a refusal as for an answer to the letter of our prayers.

III. But this condition, connecting itself with the nature of the thing asked, is nearly akin to the third class of conditions which spring out of the purpose and prerogative of God Himself. This is a view of the case which has not been sufficiently attended to by Christians. The Hearer of prayer is not the only relation in which God stands to His people. He is their Father as well; and He is, besides, the moral Governor of the intelligent universe. Therefore He uses His prerogative in answering prayer for moral purposes; and the action which He takes on the petitions of His children is a portion of that discipline to which He subjects them, and by which He trains them into strength and holiness of character.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 243.

REFERENCES: xi. 9.—*Outlines Sermons to Children*, p. 159; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 61. xi. 9, 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,091; W. Wilson, *Christ setting His Face to go to Jerusalem*, p. 364. xi. 10.—R. Case, *Short Practical Sermons*, p. 32. xi. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 959.

Chap. xi., ver. 13.—**"If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?"**

I WHILST prayer is described in the Bible as a positive duty, man's inability to pray acceptably of himself is stated in the strongest and most unequivocal terms. But if such be the nature of prayer he alone who has the Spirit can really pray. It would seem to follow that the gift of the Holy Spirit must precede all effectual asking for that gift, and that consequently there may be but little worth in such promises as that of our text. It is amongst the most frequent of pulpit addresses, that the unconverted must seek the aid of God's Spirit by prayer, and that moved by fear of the wrath on which the preacher has poured all the energy of his descriptions, they shall go straightway to their closets and entreat forgiveness of the Almighty. But what becomes of all this if the unconverted have no power

of praying—if they are not in a condition to ask for God's Spirit, inasmuch as the asking presupposes them to have it already? There is a difficulty here, but one which may be readily overcome; for long before the Spirit is possessed, as a renewing agent, He may be dwelling in man's breast as a striving agent. He does so probably in every man, certainly in every man who has been baptized into Christ. If the Spirit strive, as He often does, by exciting a desire after conversion, and by urging the duty of praying for conversion; and if the man on whom the agency works, cherish the desire and fall down on his knees; shall we not have the offering of acceptable petition, and that by an unrenewed man, and nevertheless through the operations of the Holy Ghost?

II There seems nothing wanting in this argument but a fuller demonstration that the Holy Ghost does indeed strive with unconverted men. We will fetch this fuller demonstration from the power and the agency of conscience. There is something in every man which tells him of the rightness of virtue and of the wrongness of vice, which spreads over the whole soul a feeling of satisfaction when he does what it directs, and a feeling of remorse and uneasiness whenever there is the hardihood to thwart its decisions. If you took away conscience and introduced the striving agency of God's Spirit, there would practically be the same circumstances in human condition; so that the man who has a conscience, a conscience which warns him back when he would overstep the boundary line of virtue, is situated as another would be, who, without a conscience, was striven with by the Spirit. It is, therefore, in perfect consistency with all those doctrines of Scripture, which represent man as himself incapable of supplication that we press on the unconverted the duty of praying for conversion, and encourage them by the declaration of the text.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,018.

REFERENCES: xi. 13.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 48; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 210; *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 362; *Ibid.*, vol. xii., pp. 94, 193; *Homilist*, vol. i., p. 370; new series, vol. iv., p. 120.

Chap. xi., ver. 14.—**"And He was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake."**

I. "JESUS was casting out a devil, and it was dumb." What is the message to us? Look at the Greek word here translated

"dumb." That Greek word means, in its first use, blunt, obtuse; and so a blunted or lamed man in tongue. Mark here, then, the first lesson enshrined in this little word. The power of speech was in that tongue, but that power was not presently available. The machinery of articulation was perfect, had once been used, but an intruding hand had grasped the driving-wheel, and the machinery was still. We are shown beyond all question that the man was under the possession of an intrusive force, how the once invited guest had at length become the domineering tormentor, how the once permitted suggestion had in course of time changed into the tyrant habit of a captive life. It is always so with permitted sin. The incarnation of the blessed God has greatly weakened the force of evil. And yet, is there not here an accurate picture of what is going on around us? Allowed sin always masters a man in time. The man may loathe his master, yet he obeys him; he may fear his master, yet still he does his hateful bidding.

II. The change wrought by the tempter is threefold; a blunted tongue, a defective hearing, a dulled mind. All these are implied in that one Greek word. The silencing process employed by Satan is a gradual process—a slight impeding of the freedom of action—a little poison of sin which gently impedes the circulation of the spiritual life. So surely as the unused muscle or the long-bandaged limb loses strength, so does the impeded soul lose its power of communing with God, a neglected faculty becomes a withering faculty. A religion that becomes mechanical stops of itself. And of such, what, then, is the cure? The old heathen philosophy honestly confessed that it could find no cure. "Plato," said Socrates, "perhaps the gods can forgive deliberate sin, but I do not see how." In the life and death of Christ the Saviour the mystery is solved, and the cure is made plain. We can look up to Christ even when our spirits are most dull, even when our prayers are most heavy, even when the whole soul seems weighed down, oppressed, silenced by the sin in our nature. We can look up to Him when we begin to struggle for the mastery with the bad habit of a lifetime, with the coldness of years, with the carelessness of a long duration. We can bring ourselves before Him, relying on His words of faithful promise, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

B. WILBERFORCE, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 209.

REFERENCES: xi. 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 223; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 60.

xi. 14-16.—G. G. Bradley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 193. xi. 14-28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 58; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 144. xi. 14-54.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 190. xi. 20.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 125; *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 80. xi. 21.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 112; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 213. xi. 21, 22.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 89. xi. 21-6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 613. W. L. Alexander, *Good Words*, vol. ii., pp. 243-7; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 660.

Chap. xi., ver. 23 (with Luke ix., vers. 49, 50).—"He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me, scattereth."—"And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in Thy Name, and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us," etc.

THE Antagonism of Indifference.

I. When we place these two sayings side by side, it seems clear enough from the very fact of its solemn utterance as a maxim universal to all, and even from the critical circumstances which called it forth, that the first of my texts is to be taken as the leading and the governing principle. It was spoken at a time when our Lord's mission, now far advanced, was forcing itself upon its enemies as a terrible reality, and when His miracles were startling into adoration the wondering people. Then the Pharisees spoke out a cavil which, St. Matthew tells us, had been uttered before: "He casteth out devils through Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." The words of the text hardly seem to be addressed to these bitter and determined enemies. It was on the people that the stern incisive words of the text broke in like the sound of a trumpet, warning them that they must not idly accept a suspension of belief—that they must make up their mind, and take their side. The other occasion was a very different one. Our Lord accepted what He knew to be a real but an imperfect homage—a homage of a true belief, although that belief had not led, as it ought to have led, to the great sacrifice of following the Lord. He would give it at least some crumbs from the table of His blessing; He would cast over it, at least, the skirts of a negative protection. "No man," said He, "who can work a miracle in My Name will lightly speak evil of Me. He that is not against us is on our side."

II. In these divided days, the call to do is louder than ever. We can recognise the true service of God, even if it be not in what we think the most excellent way. Let us hold our own line—the more distinctly, the more fervently, the more resolutely,

the better; and yet, unless it absolutely cross the path of our duty, we need not forbid, and we need not thwart, it. In that threefold battle for truth, for right, for godliness, there is room enough and there is work enough for all.

BISHOP BARRY, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 800.

REFERENCES: xi. 23.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 158; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 213. xi. 24-6.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 96. xi. 26.—J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 134. xi. 27.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 233. xi. 27, 28.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,920; *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 176; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 206; T. C. Finlayson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 24. xi. 28.—T. Islip, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 110. xi. 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 898. xi. 30-2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 115. xi. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,600; F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 199. xi. 33.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 252; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 354.

Chap. xi., ver. 35.—"Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness."

I. THROUGH the avenues of conscience, which is to the soul what the eye is to the body, communications from God are always pouring in. In nature, in providence, but still more by His Word, and by His own inward grace, He acts upon the man. The understanding is formed, the reason is directed, the affections are moved, the will is urged, holy influences stream in upon the inner being. And this process, up to a certain point at least in every man's life, is continually going on. To what a height this inward light is capable of being raised by culture it is impossible for us to estimate, seeing no man has ever cherished it as much as he might. But did we pray, and study, and listen, and obey the still small voice as we ought, there would be no limit to the degree in which the judgment would be directed, the heart softened, the will conformed, the thoughts made sunny, the future assured, the love of God dominant, and heaven foretasted. For if the eye be single, the whole body is full of light.

II. But it is a truth too certain, that all this light, with which God beams upon us, is capable, not only of being hindered and resisted and destroyed, but, worse than that, of being actually converted into a deeper darkness—becoming a medium of spiritual blindness, or casting the soul into a more utter night. For there is no death so locked as that which once lived the most—there is no blackness so black as the shrouded day—

there is no soul so dark as the soul that was once illumined. The grieved light goes away from some men, and no marvel now what step they take in the dark, when the Holy Ghost is gone. It is like a traveller, overtaken by the night in a dark wood. What was clear is now misty and shrouded. The precious jewel looks like a stone—or the stones may look like the most precious jewels. Shadows pass in the wood for substances, and substances for shadows. Their outline is undefined—there is no faculty to separate between the real and the false—between the vile and the good. But do not say of any one you love, do not say of yourself, that there is a night set in, which must last for ever. If there be still one latent consciousness of this light, and if there be in your heart the slightest wish for that light again, I do not fear to say that the morn is breaking, and I see the horizon tipped with light for you. For that Spirit lives in your soul, and is the same, who once moved upon just such a chaos, and just such a darkness as is going on in your mind, and He said to it, "Let there be light": and there was light.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 28.

REFERENCES: xi. 35.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 150. xi. 36.—Philpott, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 78. xi. 37-47.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 15; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., pp. 314, 316; E. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 194. xi. 40.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 219. xi 41.—J. E. Tonge, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. v., p. 318. xi. 44.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 191. xi.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 172.

Chap. xii., ver. 1.—"When there were gathered together an innumerable multitude of people, insomuch that they trode one upon another, He began to say unto His disciples first of all, Beware ye of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy."

PROFESSION without Practice.

I. That even decently conducted Christians are most extensively and fearfully ruled by the opinion of society about them, instead of living by faith in the unseen God, is proved to my mind by the following circumstance: that, according as their rank in life makes men independent of the judgment of others, so the profession of regularity and strictness is given up. The great mass of men are protected from gross sin by the forms of society. The received laws of propriety and decency, the prospec of a loss of character, stand as sentinels, giving the alarm, long

before their Christian principles have time to act. The question is, whether, in spite of our greater apparent virtue, we should not fall like others, if the restraints of society were withdrawn *i.e.* whether we are not in the main hypocrites like the Pharisees, professing to honour God, while we honour Him only so far as men require it of us.

II. Another test of being like or unlike the Pharisees may be mentioned. Our Lord warns us against hypocrisy in three respects—in doing our alms, in praying, and in fasting. (1) Doubtless much of our charity must be public, but is much of our charity also private?—is it as much private as public? (2) Are we as regular in praying in our closet to our Father which is in secret as in public? (3) We have dropped the show of fasting, which it so happens the world at the present day derides. Are we quite sure that, if fasting were in honour, we should not begin to hold fasts as the Pharisees? Thus we seek the praise of men. We see, then, how seasonable is our Lord's warning to us, His disciples, first of all to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy—professing without practising. He warns us against it as leaven, as a subtle, insinuating evil which will silently spread itself through the whole character, if we suffer it. He warns us that the pretence of religion never deceives beyond a little time, and that sooner or later, "whatsoever we have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light, and that which we have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops."

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 124.

REFERENCES: xii. 1.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 287; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 135; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 271. xii. 1-3.—S. Cox, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 372. xii. 1-5.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 187. xii. 2.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 352. xii 4, 5.—G. E. L. Cotton. *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 12. xii. 5.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 53; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 237; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 90.

Chap. xii., vers. 6, 7.—**"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."**

THESE words occur in a discourse of the Lord to His disciples, in which He is instructing and preparing them for their future work as the heralds and preachers of His kingdom. He tells them that He has no esoteric doctrine to be cherished by a

favoured few, but on the contrary, doctrines of light to be proclaimed everywhere for the healing and salvation of men. "In preaching My words to men," He says, "you will meet with dangers not a few, with enemies, some of whom will not stop short, if their power will reach so far, of deadly issues. But fear not; you are watched and protected at every step; and come life, come death, you are safe." Hence here we have two things for thought—our human fears and the Divine dissuasive from them.

I. Our fears may be divided into two kinds: those which respect this world—the temporalities of life, as we call them—and those which respect the world to come and our spiritual state and relation to that. (1) Now as regards this world and its affairs, I think many of us know that a good deal depends upon a man's temperament as to the way in which he will take things. You see that some go through life much more anxiously than others, as a matter of fact. The burden of life is to many not an easy one. They chafe and fret and groan under it, it is so heavy. (2) And then if we add to the fears about the temporalities of life, the deeper fears of the soul in regard to the spiritual state and the eternal prospect—you will see what ample scope there is for this Divine dissuasive, "Fear not."

II. We now come to the second point—the Divine dissuasive of this passage—and we see how it is supported and commended by our blessed Lord by these several arguments or supportings, as, for instance: (1) The limited character of human power and of the power of circumstances. That, where it is vividly apprehended, is a great dissuasive from fear. Fear not, for although men can say and do a great deal which may be very unpleasant to you—that may be even injurious to you—yet you always come to the limits of their power "after that." After that there is nothing more that they can do. Just so much unfriendliness or hostility or annoyances of any kind, and then, after that, there is no more that they can do. Exactly so you will find it with the things we call circumstances, although they may not be animated at all by any human feeling against you. They may arrange themselves in a malign manner, this or that way. They may vary, fluctuate, frown, threaten, sweep away property, bring in trouble; and after that there is no more that they can do. Other circumstances of a different kind will be sure to arise to soften, to assuage to improve. (2) "Fear not," for again, with God is unlimited power—the unlimited power which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. The

argument has in the heart of it this—that God is good—that God is unchangeably good, and that He will use all that infinite power that He possesses in so far as it is needed, to protect, to defend, to cherish, to save, His trusting, loving children. (3) The closing thought in the dissuasive is, that although, in one way, there is nothing great to God and nothing little, yet, in another sense, quite a true one, there is a gradation to God just as to us; for it is the doctrine of this passage—it is the teaching of our Lord here—that there is a special care, a higher care, about us. We are of more value than many sparrows. The argument is from the less to the greater. If God provides for the inferior creatures, will He be likely to neglect the superior—the unspeakably superior? That is the doctrine: "Ye are of more value than many sparrows."

A. RALEIGH, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 844.

REFERENCES: xii. 6, 7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 189; Todd, *Lectures to Children*, p. 193. xii. 8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281. xii. 8, 9.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 340; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ii., p. 412. xii. 10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 207.

Chap. xii., vers. 13-21.

THE folly of the rich fool appears:—

I. In the fact that he completely ignored his responsibility to God in the matter of his possessions. He speaks of "*my* fruits," and "*my* goods," and the Lord describes him as laying up treasure "*for himself*." Are we not all too sadly in the same condemnation with him? Are we not all too prone to take to ourselves the sole credit for any property we have acquired, or for any eminence we have reached? Yet it is just as true in every department of life, though perhaps not quite so apparent as it is in agriculture, that the chief factor of success in it is God. He gave the original aptitude and ability to the man; and it will commonly be found that the critical turning-points of life, which led directly to the results over which we felicitate ourselves, were due entirely to Him, and came altogether irrespective of our own arrangement.

II. In the fact that he ignored the claims of other men upon him for his help. He had no idea apparently that there was any other possible way of bestowing his goods than by storing them in his barns. As Augustine, quoted by Trench, has replied to his soliloquy, "Thou *hast* barns,—the bosoms of the needy, the houses of widows, the mouths of orphans and of

infants;" these are the true storehouses for surplus wealth. It is right to provide for those who are dependent on us; it is prudent to lay up something in store against a possible evil day; but after that, the storehouse of wealth should be benevolence.

III. The folly of this man is seen in the fact that he imagined that material things were proper food for his soul. The mere animal life of the body may be supported by such goods as this man was about to lay up, but the soul needs something better than these. Its true food is God Himself; and hence Jesus, in the moral of the parable, calls the man who has that rich towards God.

IV. The folly of the rich man is apparent from the fact that he had entirely ignored the truth that his material possessions were not to be his for ever. Let these two things stand out in lurid distinctness on this subject; wealth cannot buy off death, and when we die we can take none of it with us, and then you will understand how supremely foolish it is for a man to live simply and only for its accumulation.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 259.

REFERENCES: xii. 13, 14.—J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxx., p. 235. xii. 13-15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 270; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 37. xii. 13-21.—*Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 16; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 131.

Chap. xii., ver. 15.—"And He said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

BUSINESS—its Dangers and Safeguards.

I. There can be no doubt at all that the average business man's temptation must chiefly lie in this direction: to exaggerate the relative value of the thing he deals with—that is money; and in consequence, to under-estimate whatever cannot be appraised by that conventional standard of the market. To be safe, therefore, the young man embarking on a commercial life is bound to keep this risk of his calling before his eyes. He must refuse to fall down and worship any plutocracy, keeping his reverence for the good rather than for the opulent or successful; in a word, he must save himself from coming to think or act as if a man's life consisted in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

II. The safeguards. There are secondary safeguards, such as the pursuit of literature and the cultivation of a sympathising

contact with men and women in other than mere business relationships. But the only primary and sufficient safeguard for any one of us is the religion of Jesus Christ. (1) Religion opens the widest, freest outlook for the mind into the eternal truth, enlarging a man's range of spiritual sight, and enabling him to judge of all things in both worlds in their due proportion. (2) It supplies us for that reason with the only true and perfect standard by which to test the value of things, and so corrects the one-sided materialistic standard of business. (3) It transforms business itself from an ignoble to a noble calling, because it substitutes for the principle of mere profit the ideal of service.

J. OSWALD DYKES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 209.

REFERENCES: xii. 15.—J. W. Gleadall, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 331; Burrows, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 237; J. G. Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 235. xii. 15-21.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 17. xii. 16.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. i., p. 620. xii. 16-20.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 84; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 234. xii. 16-21.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 631; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 218; *Ibid.*, vol. xxi., p. 156; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 316; *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 306; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables* p., 337; R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 180.

Chap. xii., ver. 19.—"I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."

THE Privileges of Youth.

I. The spirit of the boast contained in the text is nowhere more common than in the hearts of the young. They say to themselves, as much as persons at any age, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years." If we consider a little we shall see what these goods are. (1) There is the great good of time. A young person thinks that he has this in plenty. (2) Another good, which youth feels no less sure of, is health and strength. (3) Belonging to these two feelings, and yet in some way to be distinguished from them, is the sense of having ample liberty; by which, I mean, that our time of heavy responsibility is not yet come; that there is, and ought to be, large allowance for what we do; that we may, in short, give the reins to ourselves, our fancies, and our inclinations, because we are not yet old enough to be serious.

II. If the rich man in the parable, whilst his riches were flowing in upon him so largely, had wished and resolved to be rich towards God also, what would have been his language to

his soul then? Or if any of you, so rich in the good things of youth, were also to resolve with God's grace to be rich towards God, what would be your language, the language of your hearts, whether it shapes itself into words or not? It would be a language which older men, I might almost say, would hear with envy. But, speaking more truly, it is not a sight for envy, but for the deepest joy and thankfulness, joy both of men and angels. We feel the charm of youth naturally, it cannot but awaken our interest even in itself; but when this natural interest is sanctioned by our soberest reason, when natural youth assumes, so to speak, the beauty of the spring of an eternal and a heavenly year, then it does fill us with the deepest joy; and this work of God's Spirit, far more than all those natural works of creation, is, indeed, very good. There is no more beautiful, no more blessed, sight upon this earth than a youth that is rich toward God.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 75.

REFERENCES: xii. 20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 357; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 94; E. Blencowe, *Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. i., p. 328.

Chap. xii., ver. 21.—"So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

I. CONSIDER the sinfulness of the rich man, as gathered from his address to his soul. The rich man addressed his soul when forming his plan for a long course of selfishness. "I will say to my soul, Soul thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." And what had the soul to do with the indulgences and enjoyments which he thus thought that his riches would procure? Had he addressed his body, and thus seemed forgetful or ignorant of its being immortal, we must have wondered at him less, and have thought him less degraded; but to confess that he had a soul, and then to speak to that soul as though it were material, a mere animal thing, with fleshly appetites and passions, this marked him at the very outset as being at the lowest point of sensuality; as though he knew no higher use of faculties, which distinguished him from the brute, than to give a zest to gratifications which he had in common with the brute. But, nevertheless, there was truth in the address of the sensualist; he was not so mistaken as at first he might appear. True, indeed, the soul could not literally eat, the soul could not literally drink; but the soul might have no taste, no relish, for spiritual things,

the whole man might be given up to carnal indulgences, and the soul might be in such subjection, such slavery to the flesh, as to think of nothing but how to multiply its gratifications or to increase their intenseness. The very essence of idolatry is discoverable in this address of the rich man to his soul. It may be justly said that the rich man substituted his stores for God, put them in the place of God, or looked to them to do for him what God alone could do. Do you wonder, then, that his conduct was especially offensive to God, as offensive as though, in spite of the very letter of the Second Commandment, he had fashioned an image and bowed down before it?

II. It ought to be received by us as a very impressive warning, that it was nothing but a practical forgetfulness of the uncertainty of life, which brought down a sudden judgment on the rich worldling whose history is before us. There is evidently a peculiar invasion as it were of the prerogatives of God whensoever a man calculates that death is yet distant. Every man who is not labouring earnestly to save the soul is reckoning on long life. And the fearful thing is, that this very reckoning upon life, which men would perhaps hardly think of counting amongst their sins, may be the most offensive part of their conduct in the eye of the Almighty, and draw upon them the abbreviation of that life, and thus the loss of the expected opportunities of repentance and amendment.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,544.

REFERENCES: xii. 21.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 123. xii. 22-35.—*Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 372. xii. 22-40.—R. S. Candlish, *Sermons*, p 139.

Chap. xii., vers. 23, 24.—"The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment," etc.

MAN'S Future Destiny.

I. Since the Resurrection, since Jesus came out of the sepulchre with the same or like body with which He entered into it, with the same faculties and senses, the future has ceased to be a practical question to discuss; both because of what we know and of what we do not know. We know enough to know that the changes which death makes will not be so very considerable. As the man is at night, so shall he be in the morning, although when the sun set he was living in a mortal body, and when it rose he had left the mortal body, and was living in an immortal body. But the going out of a house gives no right of inference that the man who goes out is affected in the least by the act; and

the body can seem to no one who discerns between flesh and spirit anything more than a house in which a man lives.

II. The annihilation of life is (1) against the analogies of the universe. There is no evidence, even, that the lowest grade of matter is perishable. But if the base and low cannot be destroyed, on what have you to build an inference that the high and noble shall perish? If matter holds itself secure against duration, what friction of continued existence shall touch the lofty permanence of the soul? (2) Against the affections of the universe. The universe is affectionate. All orders of existence are blood-relations one to another. The grief at death, based on the apprehension of a subtle relationship existent between all orders of life, is felt everywhere, and by all, and for all bright things. (3) Graveyards are not for spirits. God does not smother life in sepulchres. All creatures shall live because He loves them, loves them as a parent loves his own. All creatures shall live, because His heart requires their life. The parent's joy is found in the possession of children, and who is to suggest that He, the Infinite Father, shall destroy His own felicity?

III. Upon the subject of the future life Jesus did not teach fully. Of the few things which He revealed plainly, these may be enumerated: (1) That men continue to live on; (2) that the moral natures they have in the mortal body they retain in the immortal body; (3) that God alone has their destiny in charge. In His hands we may therefore reverently, prayerfully, hopefully, leave the destinies of our race.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 463.

REFERENCES: xii. 24.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 197. xii. 25, 26.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 95. xii. 29.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. i., p. 249. xii. 31.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 29.

Chap. xii., ver. 32.—**"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."**

THE Kingdom for the Children.

It is to comfort and assure "the little flock" that our Lord means when He says these words. And you will observe that His argument is twofold—one in the nature of their Father, and the other in the character of the Father's gift.

I. You cannot observe the workings of any mind without seeing that there is a strong tendency to treat God as if He were anything else rather than a Father, as if He were a God unwilling to love us and save us. Because we are—or at least,

were once—unwilling to come to God, by a strange confusion of ideas we begin to speak and act as if God were the reluctant party. As if to meet and contradict that, Christ says, "It is your Father's good pleasure." You will never have got the secret of Christ's teaching till you take more loving views of God the Father. In the original, this is a very full expression, "Your Father's good pleasure." It means this: He has considered it, He has approved it, and it is now His delight. All the forgiving and kind and fond thoughts that ever were in the world to sweeten life, they are only drops out of that deep spring of the Father's breast. What must the Fountain be? Therefore, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

II. Turn next from the Giver to the gift. Our Saviour evidently intends it to be a reasoning from the whole to the part. Shall the heir of an empire, the child of a King, nurtured in his Father's court, be anxious every day about little crumbs? What is the kingdom which the Father loves to give? That kingdom is inward. It lies in deep, secret places: it has no pageant. Its condition is humility; its gold, good works; its royalties, the chaste and simple services and sacraments of the Church; its diadem, love. It is "not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost"—righteousness its throne, peace its diadem, joy its dazzling crown. And that kingdom in a man's heart is what it is, a kingdom, because self-government is begun. In the heart, which is a kingdom, feelings are in their proper place, affections are subordinated, there is a harmony. Christ is in His right place; His pleasure is at the top, and all things are in subjection and dominion to Him.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 72.

REFERENCES: xii. 32.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 20; R. B. Isaac, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 227; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons* (1875), p. 290; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 122. xii. 35-7.—G. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 149. xii. 35-8.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. viii., p. 44. xii. 35-40.—S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 176.

Chap. xii., ver. 40.—**"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not."**

WHAT is the problem about Advent? You hear of the Son of Man coming. Sometimes you hear of His coming as a thief in the night: sometimes you hear of His returning as a bridegroom from the wedding. In the passage from which my text

is taken both these forms of speech are combined. What do they signify; are they merely figures which point to the necessity of preparation for death?

I. The first coming of Christ in great humility imports a continual lordship of His over the being and faculties of man. His purpose, the Apostles teach us, was not accomplished till He rose from the dead, and ascended on high, till He had claimed the glory which He had had with His Father before the worlds were. That was the vindication of His title to be Lord. That was the beginning of a society which could be nothing but universal, because it stood in the Name of the Son of God and Son of Man. That was necessary that the promise might be thoroughly accomplished, "The Lord God shall dwell among you, and He shall be your Father, and ye shall be His children." By this language we are able to understand that other language which refers to the coming, or to the appearing and unveiling of the Son of Man after His Ascension. We may very well admit that when our Lord says, "In such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh," He gives us all and more than all the warning respecting the hour of death which preachers have ever drawn out of His words. Assuredly it is no contradiction of His other teaching to say that, though on earth we may fancy ourselves under a law of selfishness, though here we may act as if we had no ties and relationships to those who surround us, when we close our eyes on the things with which they have been familiar, we pass into a region where we shall know assuredly that the Son of Man is reigning, where it will be impossible any longer to think that we are out of His Presence, or to escape from that Divine law of love which binds man to man, which binds earth and heaven together. The lie upon which we have acted must then be laid bare, the whole scheme of our existence must be exposed and broken in pieces; we must confess Him who gave Himself for men to be the Lord of all.

II. If this be the idea of Christ's coming, whether to the world or to individuals, which the New Testament sets before us, what is to make us ready for his coming? What is to save us from that sleep into which our Lord warns us that we may fall? What is to arouse us if it has overtaken us? Surely we must be reminded of His Presence with us. The natural notion that what is invisible is unreal; that He does not govern us because our eyes do not see Him; that He does not govern the world because the world fancies that it governs itself, this must

be set at nought. We must have an assurance that the senses are as little judges of what is true in morals as they are in physics; that self, which appears to be the centre round which everything here revolves; is no more really the centre than our earth is the centre round which the heavenly bodies revolve. What shall give us this assurance? In the Eucharist we declare that our hope is in a Lamb of God which has taken away the sin of the world by the sacrifice of Himself: therefore, we ask that we may be ready when the Son of Man comes to claim us as sacrifices to God; and that we may not be found choosing another master for ourselves, and shutting ourselves up in a hell of selfishness and despair. In the Eucharist we give thanks for a death not for ourselves only, but for the whole world, therefore in it we look forward to a redemption, which shall be not for ourselves only, but for the world, when Christ shall appear without sin, unto salvation.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 1.

REFERENCES: xii. 40.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 110. xii. 41-8.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 340. xii. 42.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. viii., p. 3. xii. 43.—H. M. Gunn, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 245. xii. 47, 48.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 18. xii. 48.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 332; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 312; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for Children*, p. 214; H. Scott Holland, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 152.

Chap. xii., ver. 49.—"**I am come to send fire on the earth.**"

THERE are three main elements, three ruling and inspiring convictions, at the root of missionary enthusiasm.

I. Of these, the first is a deep sense of the certainty and importance of the truths of the Gospel.

II. The second conviction is a sense of the need which man has of revealed truth.

III. The third conviction is a belief in the capacity of every man for the highest good—for salvation through Christ.

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 630.

REFERENCES: xii. 49.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 854; J. R. Woodford, *The Anglican Pulpit of To-day*, p. 63; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 97.

Chap. xii., ver. 50.—"**I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!**"

I. MOST persons know something of the feeling of suspense

and anxious curiosity, when they are looking forward to anything very serious, anything which they think will greatly affect their happiness; especially when they have been a long time kept in expectation of it. The hours, days, months, years, of waiting appear to them more and more tedious; they are more and more alive and awake with curiosity to know what sort of a thing it will be when present, which now at a distance occupies their mind so much. Now, our Blessed Lord, as one of us in all things, sin only excepted, had His share of this feeling so far as it is natural and innocent; at least, so we may understand His saying in the text. Instead of shrinking from His death He was the more eager to begin; so high, so courageous was His love for us, and His zeal for His Father's glory; so complete the condescension with which He entered into this and all other innocent feelings of ours.

II. Thus, as He in His merciful and infinite condescension, limited Himself as His creatures are limited—He who is the God of Eternity limited Himself to a certain time—so He set us an example, who are all of us so limited, which way our thoughts should tend. Men are apt to think they shall die contented when they have satisfied this or that wish, when they have done this or that work, when they have made so much money, when they have obtained such and such an advantage for those whom they leave behind them; and that favourite object, whatever it be, haunts them night and day, and colours in a manner almost all their thoughts and words. So were our blessed Master's sayings tinged all over with the longing expectation of the Cross. And when the Cross itself came, His disciples, and we after them, might see the meaning of very many words and deeds which could not be understood at the first. As Christ was straitened, until His painful baptism of blood and sorrow was accomplished, so St. Paul, and all who resemble Him, are straitened, until they can find some way of giving themselves up more entirely, body and soul, life and death, to Him who thought nothing at all, not even heavenly and Divine glory, too dear to give up for them. Instead of planning restlessly and wearily what we have to do next, and what after that, in some pursuit which happens just now to be interesting, we shall be straitened and anxious, thinking how little we have done yet, and what we may and ought to do, for Christ and the Church's sake.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 66.

Christ's Baptism of Suffering.

I. The whole structure of this sentence is in exact keeping with the common notion of baptism, seeing that a condition of greater freedom is evidently looked forward to by Christ as certain to result from those waves of fire through which He had to pass. He laboured under a species of bondage prior to His agony and death; and the consequence of the agony and death would, He knew, be deliverance from this bondage. There is, therefore, peculiar fitness in His describing that agony and death as a baptism with which He should be baptized. A change was to take place, and for the bringing about of that change immersion in a deep ocean of trouble was absolutely indispensable. Baptism denotes what is both temporary and refreshing. In respect to our blessed Saviour, both as to the time of endurance—for He was but plunged in the raging waters and then quickly withdrawn—and as to the undoubted change; for He went down with transgression and came up having made full expiation—in both particulars the imagery is most perfect.

II. "How am I straitened till it be accomplished!" (1) It was one consequence of our Saviour's sufferings and death that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured forth on His disciples. Until, therefore, the baptism was accomplished there could be little or none of that preparation of heart on the part of His followers which was indispensable to the reception of the spiritual magnificence and majesty of the Gospel. Thus our Lord was brought into the position of a constant restraint, like a man charged with news that would gladden an empire, while the rocks were the only audience to which he could have access. (2) Although the Spirit was given without measure to the Saviour, He was nevertheless hemmed round by spiritual adversaries, and He had continually before Him a task overwhelming in its difficulties—the keeping our nature free from every taint of corruption, the contending therein against the assaults of the devil. Is not the contrast of the state which preceded, and that which succeeded, the baptism of agony sufficient in itself to account for expressions even more sternly descriptive of bondage than that of our text? (3) Christ had not yet won the headship over all things, and therefore He was straitened by being circumscribed in Himself, in place of expanding into myriads. These, with like reason, serve to explain, in a degree, the expression of our text; though we frankly confess that so awful and inscrutable is everything connected

with the anguish of the Mediator that we can only be said to catch glimmerings of a fulness which would overwhelm us, we may suppose, with amazement and dread.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,047.

IN this awful utterance of our Substitute, as He looked forward to the Cross, we have,—

I. A longing for the baptism. He desired its accomplishment. He knew the results depending on it, and these were so Divinely glorious, so eternally blessed, that He could not but long for it—He could not but be straitened until it was accomplished.

II. The consciousness of fear and bitter anguish in contemplating it. He was truly man both in body and soul. As man He shrank from pain, He was weighed down with burdens, He was subject to sorrow; He looked on death as His enemy, and He made supplication with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death. His Divine nature did not relieve Him of one grief, or make His sufferings mere shadows.

III. The straitening in regard to its accomplishment. Like St. Paul, He was in a strait between things which pressed in opposite ways, and which must continue to press till the work was done. (1) He was straitened between the anticipated pain, and the thought of the result of that pain. (2) He was straitened between grace and righteousness. Between His love to the sinner and His love to the Father there was conflict; between His desire to save the former and His zeal to glorify the latter there was something wanting to produce harmony. He knew that this something was at hand, that His baptism of suffering was to be the reconciliation; and He pressed forward to the Cross as one that could not rest till the discordance were removed,—as one straitened in spirit till the great reconciliation should be effected. "I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

H. BONAR, *Short Sermons*, p. 96.

I. WHAT was the secret of the Saviour's earnestness? (1) His belief in a Divine commission. (2) His belief in the solemnity of time.

II. If these convictions possessed our souls—(1) they would dispel the delusions of time; (2) they would overcome the hindrances to submission; (3) they would break down the impediments of fear. E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 70.

REFERENCES: xii. 50.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 24;

G. Davis, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 88. xii. 51.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. iv., p. 217. xii. 52.—R. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 235. xii. 54-57.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,135.

Chap. xiii., vers. 1-3.

THE Judgments of God.

I. Our Lord does not say, Those Galileans were not sinners at all. Their sins had nothing to do with their death. Those on whom the tower fell were innocent men. He rather implies the very opposite. We know nothing of the circumstances of either calamity; but this we know—that our Lord warned the rest of the Jews that unless they repented, that is, changed their minds, and therefore their conduct, they would all perish in the same way. And we know that that warning was fulfilled within forty years, so hideously and so awfully that the destruction of Jerusalem remains as one of the most terrible cases of wholesale ruin and horror recorded in history, and as, I believe, a key to many a calamity before and since.

II. But we may learn another lesson from the text. These Galileans, it seems, were no worse than the other Galileans; yet they were singled out as examples, as warnings, to the rest. Pestilences, conflagrations, accidents of any kind which destroy life wholesale, even earthquakes and storms, are instances of this law; warnings from God, judgments of God, in the very strictest sense; by which He tells men, in a voice awful enough to the few, but merciful and beneficent to the many, to be prudent and wise; to learn henceforth either not to interfere with the physical laws of His universe, or to master and wield them by reason and science.

III. The more we read, in histories, of the fall of great dynasties, or of the ruin of whole classes or whole nations, the more we feel—however much we may acquiesce with the judgment as a whole—sympathy with the fallen. It is not the worst, but often the best specimens of a class or of a system who are swallowed up by the moral earthquake which has been accumulating its force, perhaps, for centuries. May not the reason be that God has wished to condemn, not the persons, but their systems? that He has punished them, not for their private, but for their public faults? It is not the men who are judged—it is the state of things which they represent; and for

that very reason may not God have made an example, a warning, not of the worst, but of the very best specimens of a class or system which has been weighed in His balance and found wanting?

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 252.

REFERENCES: xiii. 1-5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 254; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 408; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 150.

Chap. xiii., vers. 2, 3.

I. THE folly and uncharitableness of mankind are in nothing more clearly seen than in their disposition to blame everyone who is unfortunate, and to think themselves surely in the right as long as they are prosperous. "While he lived," said the Psalmist of the worldly-minded, "he counted himself a happy man; and so long as thou doest well unto thyself men will speak good of thee." On the other hand, let one be smitten with disease or poverty, he shall never want some to ascribe his sufferings to the intemperance of his youth, to his extravagance, carelessness, or vicious indulgences while he had money, or to the judgments of God on his covetousness and want of generosity. And yet every day's experience proves, both in public and private life, that the wisest of us is deceived, and the best man disappointed in three out of four of his worldly hopes and expectations. The reason of this is, that the present life is a state of trial, and not of reward and punishment; and the use to be made of it is, that the afflicted learn patience, the prosperous godly fear, and all men charity and candour in judging of others.

II. Our Lord's words in the text are a warning addressed to the Jews as a nation, and awful beyond any human lesson, from the consideration that it was so soon and so terribly accomplished. Jerusalem would not know the things that belonged to her peace; she would not be gathered under the wings of her mighty and gracious Redeemer; therefore, not one only of her towers fell, but all her walls and towers, yea, even the Temple of the Lord was laid even with the ground, so that not one stone was left upon another; not a few Galileans only defiled her altars with their blood, but the whole multitude of her children were slain with the edge of the sword, or led captive into all nations—an everlasting monument of God's anger against obstinacy and hardness of heart, and a sad lesson

to such as judge their neighbours guilty because they suffer, that they also repent if they hope not to perish in like manner.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 75.

REFERENCES: xiii. 2-4.—S. A. Brooke, *Sermons*, p. 42. xiii. 3.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 79. xiii. 5-10.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. ii., p. 146.

Chap. xiii., vers. 6-9.

THE Barren Fig Tree.

I. God has placed us in the most favourable circumstances for the bringing forth of fruit. The privileges of the Jews were small in comparison with those which we enjoy. The light which they enjoyed was that of the early dawn; ours is that of the noonday sun. They had the prophets; we have the Son of God.

II. God expects exceptional fruit from a tree on which He has bestowed such exceptional advantages. If we have so much more than other nations, we ought to be just so much better than they, for the fruit in this case is that of character. Righteousness, meekness, fidelity,—in a word, moral excellence springing from our faith in Christ, and our devotion to Him,—that is the fruit which God expects to find in us as the occupants of His vineyard.

III. God pronounces sentence of destruction on all who, having had such privileges, bring forth no fruit. The Church's life depends on the present members of the Church, and only through their fruitfulness can its permanence be insured. The same is true of individuals. When they cease to grow, they cease to live; and barrenness is at once the symptom of death and the reason why they die.

IV. This sentence pronounced on the barren fig tree is not at once carried into execution. The stroke of Divine justice is arrested for a season, and its arrest is due to the mediation of the great High Priest. But there is no indifference; and if the fruitless man repent not, the day of the Lord will come to him as a thief in the night, and he will suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 276.

REFERENCES: xiii. 6.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 52. xiii. 6-9.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 289; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 358; E. Blencowe, *Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. i., p. 386; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 927.

Chap xiii., ver. 7.—"Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?"

FIT to Live.

Men ask, "Are you fit to die?" and men hold up death before the sinner's eyes, and men dwell in solemn warning on the world to come, and on far-off images of death. But God asks, "Are you fit to live?" What, then, is life, if we have to answer the question, "Are we fit to live?" We must seek for the answer where we find the question. The Lord of life has taken a fruit tree in a garden as the best example of the nature of life, both here and in the one great judgment type, when He cursed the barren fig tree, and withered it root and branch, to be for ever the emblem of the lost nation.

I. Life is an internal growth; this is the first great truth. The outer world comes to it in forces of all kinds, and it receives them all, draws them into its being, subdues them to itself, lives by and through them, but makes no stir itself; neither moves nor utters sound, nor is violent, nor fills the world with the rush of impetuous strength. But planted by a Master's hand it stays there, drawing from common earth and common air a growth and a beauty new and unknown to them by its own transforming power; and so it goes on, never losing a moment, making all things serve it in turn, be it rain or frost or wind or sun. Rain and frost and wind and sun touch it each with a power of their own, be it in hate or love; but no sooner do they touch it than the life within seizes on the power, masters it, changes it, gives it a new nature, makes it part of a new life, and to take strange new forms of bud and leaf and flower and fruit. The moment the life does not master the forces which come, that moment it begins to lose its own vitality, and therefore silent mastery of an outward world is life.

II. The great question, "Are you fit to live?" takes this form: first, has all the digging and culture and money spent and time been honestly used? Has it ornamented you, and budded into a growth of leaves fair to look on? And, secondly, is there a ripeness of life coming of such a nature as to be food for the living, and a seed of life for fresh planting? Where is the ceaseless inward power that transmutes all that reaches it into luxuriant growths of new and pleasant services, the silent sustained mastery that, come good, come evil, takes it all, and changes it into crop after crop in due season of help for others, life by which others may live? Tried by this test, are you fit to live? E. THRING, *Church of England Pulpit*, April 3rd, 1880.

REFERENCES: *xiii.* 7, 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 650;

Ibid., vol. xxv., No. 1,451. xiii. 8.—J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 384; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 48.

Chap. xiii., ver. 9.—"And if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down."

The first thing which strikes us, perhaps, in this transaction is its individuality. There must have been many vines and many fig trees in the vineyard; but the story is told as if the whole vineyard were for that one tree alone, and as if the great Proprietor concerned Himself only with it. The inference is evident—the whole Church spreads its provisions for you. As much as if you were the only member in that Church, the whole circuit of its ordinances is for you. Personally, distinctly, separately, God deals with you; He visits you; He examines you; He expects from you; He is grieved or He is pleased with you. It is all in the closest individuality. It is not, "Is this a fruitful Church?" but, "Are you a fruit-bearer in this Church?"

I. It is a very humbling recollection, those years of love and care, those years of unfaithfulness and emptiness which God all along has been counting. The true measure of the emptiness is the extent of the culture. Had the dressing not been what it is, the wonder would have been less. But when we think of all that hand has done—all the cherishing and the watching and the pruning and the training,—then we can estimate that dismal word, "None, none." "He sought fruit, and found none."

II. But here the question forces itself upon us, "What is fruit?" For I can hear some one saying, "I know that I have borne very little fruit, but I hope it is not none." What is fruit? What is it which is to a man what the figs are to the fig tree? I answer: (1) It would be something appropriate to his nature, accordant with his being—"For men do not gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles." And what is the nature of the being of a man? Physical, intellectual, impassioned, spiritual. Such, then, must fruit be, real and tangible, visible and felt, reasonable, thoughtful, balanced, affectionate, earnest, spirit going forth to spirit, assimilating itself to God. (2) It must be fruit in its season. We do not expect man's fruit at child's age. (3) It is not fruit until it is for the Owner's sake. It is not fruit-growing in thought, word, or deed, for itself or for you; it is something for God, something thought, said, done, for the sake of God. (4) It must be in its nature sanctified, drawn

from the Father, received through the Son, matured and mellowed by providences, full of love.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 133.

Chap. xiii., vers. 10-17.

THE Impotent Woman.

I. This impotent woman may fairly be taken as a type of character to which we, or many of us, answer; and answer much more closely than, for example, to that of the prodigal son. For if we have inherited a soul naturally Christian, or have had a pious nurture and training, or if, under the mask of our insensibility or our indifference to religion, the grace of God has wrought on our hearts in secret and inscrutable ways, we probably have not broken into open rebellion or flagrant vice, and wasted our patrimony in riotous living. We much more nearly resemble this faithful daughter of faithful Abraham. For her misfortune was, not that she was a contented slave in willing submission to an evil power, but that she was held in a grievous bondage, insomuch that, try how she would, she could in nowise lift herself into straightness and health. Like her, despite all our efforts after truth and goodness, there is a spirit of infirmity in us, an incompetency to do the good we would; a subtle, mysterious malady whose origin is in the will —a malady inscrutable to human eyes, immedicable by human art. There is but One who can make us straight. The Healer of the impotent woman can heal us. Only Christ, the strong Son of God, can redeem us from the weakness which mars our service; but He will do it if we let Him.

II. We may also learn why He often delays His help. God often delays to grant us the help we ask and need, that He may develop faith in us by trial, that He may let patience have her perfect work, that out of weakness we may be made strong by conflict and prayer and endeavour; and last and best of all, that, when we are thus prepared for His coming, He may bring us a good beyond our hopes, and bestow on us a blessing greater than we could once ask or receive.

III. Finally, we may learn, when we are exercised by these kind delays, where and when to look for the Divine appearing. We shall find Christ, as the impotent woman found Him, in the synagogue on the Sabbath; or, to translate the phrase into modern terms of speech, we shall find Him amid the sanctities of worship, when the soul has learned to rest in Him.

S. COX, *Sunday Magazine*, 1886, p. 306.

REFERENCES: xiii. 10.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 111.

xiii. 10-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,426. xiii. 10-17.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 88; W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 144. xiii. 11-13.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 43; W. Walters, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 326. xiii. 11-14.—T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 136. xiii. 18, 19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., pp. 471, 472. xiii. 20, 21.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., pp. 471, 479. xiii. 23.—D. McLeod, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxi., p. 275; J. Burton, *Sermons on Christian Life and Truth*, p. 22; R. W. Church, *Human Life and its Conditions*, p. 97. xiii. 23, 24.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 309; *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 187; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 256; F. W. Farrar, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 369.

Chap. xiii., vers. 24.

ETERNAL Life not to be Won without Toil.

I. Our Lord says, "Strive;" and He vouchsafes to add one reason why we should strive. A gate is appointed for us to enter into—the gate which leads to our true home, the only place where we can be happy, and this gate is strait, *i.e.*, very narrow. So strait, so narrow, is this gate and way, that it cannot be found for mere seeking. Many, many there are who know more or less of it, have a true notion where it is to be found, and really wish they had entered in and were moving along that way; but they have not the courage to take the true and only method of entering; they will not make themselves low, little, and humble; they will not stoop, so the lowly door keeps them out; they load themselves with earthly riches, cares, and pleasures, so that they and their burdens take up too much room to crowd in through the narrow gate; they will not be converted and become as little children, so they cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

II. Men hold easily on, hardly seeking, not at all striving, until their path in life is run out, and they find themselves all on a sudden close to the other narrow gate, the very doorway of heaven itself, which is also called strait and narrow, because none may go through it who has not the mind of Christ, the lowly, meek, humble, self-denying mind, which He so earnestly invited, and charged all who would come to Him to learn of Him. But these have not learned it; and what is the consequence? When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door,—*i.e.*, when the day of trial is over, and the night of judgment is come, and when the work of this world, according to the counsel of God, is ended,—it will be as in orderly and strict households, when darkness and the hour of rest is come, and the family has retired, and the doors

are made fast for the night; at such a time, if strangers, who have no claim to such a favour, much more of incorrigible servants who have forfeited their claim, come knocking and demanding admittance, the Master will say, "I know you not whence ye are." Who can describe the horror and despair which will come upon them in that moment, when they shall hear Him who is love saying to them, "Depart from Me"?

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 128.

REFERENCES: xiii. 24.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 161; A. Scott, *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 97; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. viii., No. 475; J. H. Wilson, *The Gospel and its Truths*, p. 51; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*. vol. i., p. 119. xiii. 24-7.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 281, xiii. 30.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 193. xiii. 31-33.—*Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 213. xiii. 31, 32.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 202. xiii. 32.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 97. xiii. 34. *Ibid.*, p. 246; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 209. xiii.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 204; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vi., p. 563. xiv. 1.—*Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 241. xiv. 1-4.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 69. xiv. 1-6.—W. Hanna, *Our Lord's Life on Earth*, p. 144; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 68. xiv. 1-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 351; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 155. xiv. 1-35.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 141. xiv. 3.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 217. xiv. 3-5.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 32. xiv. 3-6.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii,, p. 183. xiv. 7.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 195. xiv. 7, 8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 251. xiv. 7-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 477; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 309; C. Kingsley, *National Sermons*, p. 322; H. Goodwin, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 13.

Chap. xiv., ver. 10.—"Go and sit down in the lowest room."

I. To take the "lowest room" towards God is: (1) To be content simply to take God at His word, without asking any questions or raising any doubts, but to accept at His hand all that God graciously vouchsafes to give you—the pardon and the peace; to be a receptacle of love, a vessel into which, of His free mercy, He has poured and is pouring now, and will go on to pour for ever, the abundance of His grace. (2) Next, it is to be just what God makes you—to rest where He places you—to do what He tells you—only because He is everything and you nothing—conscious of a weakness which can only stand by leaning, and an ignorance which needs constant teaching—to be always emptying, because God is always filling.

II. How are we to take the lowest room towards man? It

is quite useless to attempt to be humble with a fellow-creature, unless you are really humble with God. Do not put yourself up into the chair of judgment upon any man; but rather see yourself as you are; everybody is inferior in something—far worse than that man in some things. So your words will not grow censorious; and if you sit low enough, you will be sure to speak charitably. Sympathy is power, but there is no sympathy where there is self. Self must be destroyed to make sympathy. Do not mistake patronising for love. When you comfort sorrow, look well to it that you touch another's grief with a reverential hand. And sin—whatever you do, never treat sin with roughness or contempt. The Pure and Holy One never did that. He dealt with the worst sinner delicately. If you ask, "How am I to go lower?" among the thousand rules I select one—exalt Christ. If Christ do but occupy His right place in your heart, you will be sure in the presence of that majesty and of that beauty to go and sit down in the lowest room.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1867, p. 37.

REFERENCES: xiv. 10.—T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 11; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 251; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 270; G. H. Wilkinson, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv. p. 310.

Chap. xiv., ver. 11.—"For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

THIS is one of the sayings which we gather from the Gospels to have been frequently in our Lord's mouth, and this means that it had some variety of application—now graver, now lighter. In the passage which we just read, it was His comment on an exhibition of what we should call *vanity*. On the surface He seemed to point not so much to the spiritual fault which was at the root of the pushing for the first seats, as to its futility, to the punishment which certainly and speedily overtook. The first seat, so claimed, could only be held for a moment, till the host came. Then the guests would be sorted; to have placed himself too low would bring credit, and to have placed himself too high humiliation.

I. What our Lord said was typical. It was a parable in the sense that it was of a character He spoke. This was only a *trait* of it. Those who chose the chief places at the feast were the same class of persons as in other and more serious ways thrust themselves forward—"trusted in themselves and despised others." And it was a parable, in the sense that while speaking

of an outward act and of an immediate and visible reward, He was thinking of the whole view of human life, and of the objects and rewards of human endeavour of which those were a type. It was a parable of the false and of the true estimate of greatness, of the reversal of human judgments, of the blindness and littleness of human ambitions.

II. Humility is the necessary and inevitable attitude of a Christian soul—of a soul which keeps in sight the revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which knows itself a child of God, fallen, lost, yet restored and pardoned in Him. This attitude is never lost. It affects all relations. As between themselves men vary of course greatly. God has ordered human life, and all its natural motives and situations are part of His providence. He does not wish us to blind our reason, and to say that that is good which conscience and common sense tell us to be mean and bad. He makes the desire to excel, the pleasure of success, to be the springs of energy which are generally necessary to a manly and useful life. We may sometimes puzzle ourselves if we try in theory to make it clear how such judgments on others and such natural ambitions can harmonise with the spirit of perfect humility. But the honest heart solves the difficulty in action. E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 188.

Chap. xiv., vers. 12-14.

CHRIST'S Counsel to His Host.

Are ordinary dinner-parties wrong, then, in the eye of Christ, our Law-giver? Does He really condemn the custom of having our friends and social equals to dine with us, and really demand that we entertain instead, if we entertain at all, only those who are conventionally below us—only the poor and destitute, the most melancholy objects, the most miserable creatures we can find?

I. With respect to the passage before us, the veiled message, the enfolded spirit of which I should like to penetrate and seize, there are those, doubtless, who will maintain that it needs no explanation, that what our Lord taught at the Pharisee's table was just this: that His host should give up entertaining his well-to-do relatives and friends, who were able to return the compliment, and should devote himself instead to the entertainment of the "poor, the maimed, the lame, and the blind," by which he would secure a greater recompense. This, they would affirm, is what He called upon the man to do, as the best and blessedest thing; but it is not for *us* to do nowadays. With

some other of His counsels and admonitions, it cannot be carried out by us; is not suitable or applicable to the present time. In reply to which I say, that it never was suitable or applicable, and hence could not have been intended by Christ. He never defied or contravened human nature: how could He? God created human nature, in all lands and ages, to go out after intercourse with kindred spirits, with persons of our own tastes and habits, of our own rank or order; and hence I know, and am sure, that Christ the Son of man never meant what, on a superficial glance, He seems to be meaning here. The question is one not at all of social fellowship, but of expenditure; and of the objects to which our great expenditure should be devoted. When you would lavish trouble and money, says Christ, let the lavishing be not for your own personal gratification, but for the blessing of others.

II. But the admonition of the text reaches beyond dining; it applies generally to the habit of laying out freely, profusely, unstintedly, in order to any comfort, profit, or enlargement for ourselves, and exhorts us instead to confine such laying out to generous and benevolent projects—to the work of giving pleasure, of rendering service, of communicating good, which is the very principle and Spirit of Him who, when He poured out His soul unto death, did it to bring us to God. Now this has its own peculiar and very grand recompense, says Christ, from which they who are mainly intent on expending for themselves are shut out, in the blessedness of which they can have no share. It finds its recompense in the "resurrection of the just." Yes, in every resurrection out of evil into good condition, out of disorder and wrong into righteousness and order that is accomplished on earth, it is reward. But there is something besides, most present and near; for there is always a resurrection of the just within us, as often as we do anything with outlay, for love and goodness. It begets infallibly a revival, a fresh quickening and expansion of the spirit of love and goodness; and herein is the constantly-abiding, ever-returning recompense of those whose gracious habit it is to look not upon their own things, but upon the things of others. Their truest and best reward lies in the heavenly quality and capacity that is being daily fostered and deepened within them.

S. A. Tipple, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 280.

References: xiv. 12-24.—T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 145. xiv. 14.—Parker, *Wednesday Evenings at Cavendish Chapel*, p. 64. xiv. 15-24.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*,

vol. xxviii., p. 387. xiv. 16.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, p. 21. xiv. 16, 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225; T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 16.

Chap. xiv., vers. 16-24.

THE Great Supper. Note:—

I. The feast. This is the Gospel which God has provided for mankind, sinners. It is a feast (1) in respect of the excellence of the provision which it sets before us; (2) in respect of abundance, for the supply is inexhaustible; (3) in respect of fellowship; (4) in respect of joy.

II. The invited guests. We have received the invitation. This, therefore, is not a mere matter of antiquarian interest, or of curious exegetical importance. It concerns our own spiritual and immortal welfare; for, though the invitation is given through the instrumentality of a servant,—the preacher,—it comes from the great God Himself, and on that account it is not to be trifled with or despised.

III. Look at the reception given by those first invited to the call which had been addressed to them: "They all with one consent began to make excuse." These excuses were all pretexts. Perhaps they deluded themselves into the belief that they were acting in good faith; but if they had gone deeper down into their hearts, they would have found that they were deceiving themselves, and putting forth as excuses things which, if they had been earnestly determined to go to the feast, would not have kept them for a moment.

IV. Those who persistently decline to come to the feast shall be for ever excluded from its enjoyment. The rejecters of Christ are themselves eternally rejected of Christ.

V. Finally, this parable reveals to us the fact, that, notwithstanding the rejection of this invitation by multitudes, God's house shall be filled at last. Heaven shall be fully occupied with God's redeemed people, and the saved shall not be few.

W. M. TAYLOR, *The Parables of Our Saviour*, p. 290.

REFERENCES: xiv. 16-24.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol i., p. 201; *Ibid.*, vol. ix., p. 270; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 341; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 98; A. B. Bruce, *Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 325.

Chap. xiv., ver. 17.—"Come; for all things are now ready."

REASONS for Embracing the Gospel.

I. You believe that the Gospel is true; perhaps upon no one point are your convictions so full and clear and decided. It

matters not whence this conviction has been derived; we have the fact, and here we take our stand and make our appeal. Why not embrace it? "Come; for all things are now ready."

II. While you admit the Gospel record to be true, you at the same time approve of the entire subject-matter of its testimony. The human mind, unclouded by prejudice and unperverted by sophistry, is always in favour of the Gospel. If the Gospel is not only true, but if in all its principles and claims it is precisely what you feel it ought to be; nay, if you mean—certainly expect, sooner or later—to come upon the ground where it would put you, and be what it requires you to be,—why, we ask, in view of all that is intelligible in your convictions of the truth and reasonableness, why not embrace it?

III. Conscience, enlightened by the truth, requires you to embrace the Gospel, reproves you for not doing it, and heralds a painful retribution for refusing or neglecting to do it. Conscience may be stupid sometimes and not speak; but its voice, whenever heard, is clearly, decidedly, uniformly in favour of practical spiritual religion.

IV. You feel that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the very thing for need; that is, as you look at it carefully, study it in its different aspects, and examine closely its provisions, it is precisely adapted to all those wants which, as unsatisfied, are the causes of your disquietude and pain. You see and feel that it is the very hope your troubled spirit needs. You have no doubt that it is a good hope, a well-founded hope; why not embrace it and let your emancipated spirit go free?

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 58.

REFERENCE: xiv. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,354.

Chap. xiv., ver. 18.—"They all with one consent began to make excuse."

THAT God's call is often disobeyed is a matter of fact, of which our consciences cannot pretend to be ignorant. But the nature of the excuses given is well worthy of our consideration.

I. One of these excuses arises from a feeling that our common work is not a matter of religion; and that therefore it is not sinful to neglect it. Idleness and vice are considered as two distinct things; and it is very common to say, and to hear it said, of such a one that he is idle, but that he is perfectly free from vice. Idleness is not vicious, perhaps, but it is certainly sinful; and to strive against it is a religious duty, because it is highly offensive to God. This is so clearly shown in the Parable of the Ten Talents, in that of the Sower and the Seed, and even

in the account of the Day of Judgment, given by our Lord in the twenty-fifth chapter of St. Matthew, that it cannot require a very long proof. In the description of the Day of Judgment, the sin for which the wicked are represented as turned into hell is only that they have done no good. It is not mentioned that they were vicious, in the common sense of the word; but they were sinful, inasmuch as they had not done what God commanded them to do.

II. Another excuse more nearly resembles the excuses made by the men in the parable: you do not attend to the call of God, because there is some other call which you like better. You complain, or rather you say to yourselves, that the work is very irksome to you, and you cannot see the use of it. It is likely enough that the work is irksome; for so corrupt is our nature that God's will is generally irksome to us, because He is good and we are evil. But is this such an excuse as God will allow for not doing what He has commanded us? Is it not here rather that we should learn to practise our Saviour's command, "Let a man deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me"? What is denying ourselves, but doing what we do not like, because it is the will of our Master? What is to take up our cross daily, but to find and to bear daily some hindrance in ourselves or others, which besets and would close up our path of duty? Against idleness, no less than against other sins, the Christian has the only sure means of victory. The natural evil inclination, the weak and corrupt flesh, still finds duty painful; but the regenerate spirit, born again of the Spirit of God, and sharing in its Father's likeness, finds the will of its Father more pleasant than the flesh finds it painful; and so the will of God is done, and the man is redeemed from the bondage of sin and misery.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 93.

REFERENCES: xiv. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 578; E. Blencowe, *Sermons to a Country Congregation*, vol. ix., p. 198; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 154. xiv. 22.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 1874, p. 263; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 129.

Chap. xiv., ver. 23.—**"And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled."**

ACCEPTANCE of Religious Privileges Compulsory.

I. Consider what first of all presents itself to our thoughts —our birth into the world. Allow that this is a world of

enjoyment, yet unquestionably it is a world of care and pain. Also, most men will judge that the pain on the whole exceeds the enjoyment on the whole. But whether this be so or not with most men, even if there be *one* man in the whole world who thinks so, that is enough for my purpose. It is enough if only there be one person to be found, who thinks sickness, disappointment, anxiety, affliction, suffering, fear, to be such grievous ills, that he had rather not have been born. If this be the sentiment only of one man, that man, it is plain, is, as regards his very existence, what the Christian is relatively to his new birth—an unwilling recipient of a gift. We are not asked whether we will choose this world, before we are born into it. We are brought under the yoke of it, whether we will or no; since we plainly cannot choose or not choose, before the power of choice is bestowed on us, this gift of a mortal nature.

II. Such is our condition as men; it is the same as Christians. For instance, we are not allowed to grow up before choosing our religion. We are baptized in infancy. Our sponsors promise for us. We find ourselves Christians; and our duty is, not to consider what we should do if we were not Christians, not to go about disputing, sifting the evidence for Christianity, weighing this side or that, but to act upon the rules given us, till we have reason to think them wrong, and to bring home to ourselves the truth of them, as we go on, by acting upon them—by their fruits on ourselves.

III. We have the remarkable facts (1) that whole households were baptized by the Apostles, which must include slaves as well as children. (2) The usage existed in the Early Church of bringing such as had the necessary gifts to ordination, without asking their consent. (3) Consider the conduct of the Church from the very first time any civil countenance was extended towards it, and you will have a fresh instance of the constraining principle of which I speak. What are national conversions, when kings submitted to the Gospel and their people followed, but going out into the highways and hedges, and compelling men to come in? And though we can conceive cases in which this urgency was unwisely, over-strongly, unseasonably, or too extensively applied, yet the principle of it is no other than that of the baptism of households mentioned in the Acts.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 52.

REFERENCES: xiv. 23.—J. Fraser, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p 1; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No 227.

Chap. xiv., ver. 24.—"None of these men which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

God's Call to the Young.

I. God's call, addressed to the soul of every man, is a call to him to be happy for ever; and this is the same thing as calling upon him to be holy, for holiness and happiness are one in God, and they are one also in the children of God. Holiness in God's creatures consists in their drawing near to God and becoming like unto Him. No man hath seen God, however, at any time; but the brightness of His glory and the express image of His Person man has seen; and although we now see Him no longer with our bodily eyes, yet with the story of His life and character handed down to us from those who did see and hear Him—with His Spirit ever dwelling amongst us, revealing Him to all those who desire Him—we do, for all practical purposes, see and know Him still.

II. As, then, Christ laboured all His life, beginning in His boyhood, to obey God's special call to Him, so we can best imitate Christ by labouring all our lives to obey God's special call to us. Now, this call is made known to us, not by a miracle, nor by a voice from heaven; but partly by the circumstances of our age and outward condition, and partly by the different faculties and dispositions of our minds. Generally, to all young persons God's call is to improve themselves; but what particular sort of improvement He calls you to, that you may learn from the station in life in which He has placed you.

T. Arnold, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 86.

References: xiv. 25, 26.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 251; *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 196; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 230. xiv. 25-30.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 90. xiv. 26.—G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 160. xiv. 26, 27.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 331. xiv. 27—W. C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 200. xiv. 28-30.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 40; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,159. xiv. 31, 32.—*Ibid.* vol. xi., No. 632.

Chap. xiv., ver. 34.—"Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"

I. What is it in the spiritual life which answers to the influence of salt in the natural life? I answer: A certain deep, secret power of the Spirit of God, acting generally through the word, in the conscience, upon the intellect, the affections, the will of a man, whereby he is made and kept in a state of inward life

and purity; and whereby, again, he is, among his fellow-men, with whomsoever he comes in contact a means and channel of good, of truth, of a sound state of holiness and happiness. The salt in man is the Divine part that is in him; a presence imbuing all his thoughts with God; and the salt which such men carry, the salt of the Church, is that expansive propagating power with which the truth is entrusted for God, that it may cleanse, change, save the whole earth.

II. For this holy property we are all responsible. For it is a thing greatly depending upon our use and cultivation of it. It can easily be diminished, and it can continually be increased. A very little sin, a very little carelessness, a very little worldly contact, a very little self-indulgence, a very little grieving of the Spirit of God, will impoverish it, vitiate it, neutralise it. It will lose its virtue, it will grow vapid, it will cease to be. But one true prayer, one act pleasing to God, one honouring of the Holy Ghost, will immediately quicken it, and give it a keener power. For it is very sensitive and very susceptible to all influence. The soul's atmosphere is always affected, moment by moment.

III. It is God's common law, that that which is best in its use, is also that which is worst in its abuse. The brine which does not cure, destroys. The same salt which fertilises the field can turn a garden into a desert. Just so it is with that mystic, hallowing, self-diffusing principle in heavenly life which is in the soul. Trifle with it, and it will go; and if it go, the emptiness will be greater than if it had never been. Shut it up, and do not use it; and by stagnation it will grow corrupt. Turn it away from the purpose for which it was implanted, and by retribution it will become your misery and your sin. Lose it, and it will be, at the last day, your heaviest condemnation. "Salt is good: but if the salt once lose his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned?"

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 245.

THESE words bring us at once, as Christian citizens, into contact with the most fearful and difficult problen of our times.

I. If there ever was a people since the first promulgation of the Gospel, who from their position, their political advantages, their commercial influence, ought to be able practically to fulfil the noble office of being the salt of the earth, it is our own nation: and in some measure I do trust we are answering to this character. Let us not conceal either side of the picture.

We need encouragement as well as exhortation. To some extent we have held forth the word of truth, and are doing the work of evangelising the world. Some grains of the salt yet possess and exert their conserving and quickening power. But very many have lost their savour. In the midst of this Christian people there are large portions of the social body which are utterly without power for good, and not only so, but in themselves the subjects of moral and spiritual decay. These are the salt that has lost its savour.

II. With such salt in the physical world, the case, as our Saviour's words go on to state, is hopeless. The mere material, once endued by God's creative hand with vivid and salutary qualities, and having lost these qualities, no man may requicken or restore. And thus, too, it would be with mere animal life. The loss of vital power no human means can remedy. Of both of these we can say only, "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away." In neither case is there bestowed the gift of self-guidance, of conscious reflection and determinate action. In neither of them is there responsible free-will, able of itself to fall—able to seek His help from whom is every good gift, again to rise. But with man's spirit, thank God, it is not so. Here, the salt may lose its savour, and be again seasoned. Here we are in a higher region of being altogether. Here God acts, according indeed to the same analogies, and consistently with the same unchangeable attributes, but by different and higher laws, belonging to the spiritual kingdom. And here it is not as in creation, where He carries on His mysterious agencies in secret alone. In the far nobler work of re-creation and regeneration He condescends to accept His people as His fellow-workers. By persuasion, by preaching, by the ordinances of grace, all administered by human means, He is pleased to carry on the conversion of the souls of men, and the restoration to life and vigour of the dead and withered members of the Church.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 203.

THREE times, and in three different connections, this memorable proverb is recorded in our Lord's teaching—in each case in reference to the failure of that which was excellent and hopeful. In St. Matthew it is applied generally to the influence of His new people on the world; in St. Mark, to the danger to ourselves of the careless or selfish use of our personal influence; in St. Luke, to the conditions of sincere discipleship. But in all cases it contemplates the possible failure of religion to do its

perfect work. There are temptations and mischiefs arising uot of our religion itself, out of the position in which it places us and the things which it encourages in us. Let us take two or three examples.

I. "Who loved me," says St. Paul, "and gave Himself for me." There are hardly more affecting words in the New Testament, and they describe what must thrill through every man's mind who believes in the Cross of Christ, just in proportion as he grasps its meaning. But it is not without reason that we are told that what should kindle his boundless devotion may be full of peril. It may touch the subtle springs of selfishness. Religious autobiography is not without warnings that the true and awful words, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" may be perverted into a narrow and timid care for it, worried with petty fears and scruples, or cares ignoble and degrading, because without interest in God's great purposes without a generous trust in His wisdom and mercy, without sympathy for others.

II. Again, religion must be active; and towards the evils which are in the world it is bound to be hostile and aggressive. And yet this necessity shows us too often a religion, a very sincere and honest religion, which cannot avoid the dangers which come with activity and conflict. It sometimes seems to lose itself and its end in the energy with which it pursues its end.

III. Again, religion is a matter of the affections; and men may be led astray by their affections in religion as in other things. We must carry the remembrance of the awful saying of the text with us, not only in our hours of relaxation and enjoyment, but when we believe ourselves to be most intent and most sincere in doing our Master's service.

DEAN CHURCH, *Oxford University Herald*, Dec. 16th, 1882.

REFERENCES: xiv. 34, 35; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 1; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 29. xiv.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 219.

Chap. xv., vers. 1, 2.—**"Then drew near unto Him all the publicans and sinners for to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them."**

IT has been observed that intense cold will produce very much the same effect as fervent heat. The ring of iron that surrounds a wheel, being exposed to keen frosts during a long winter's

night, will produce a sensation and an effect on a sensitive skin very much the same as that the same ring will produce, if heated in the fire when the smith takes it from the furnace to hammer it on the anvil. Intense cold and intense heat thus often produce, in a manner that might be easily explained, the same effect. But it is true in the realm of mind and heart, as well as in the region of matter, that opposites do often produce similar effects. Hatred and love have this in common,—that the object of love and the object of hatred are equally in the thoughts of the person loving or hating. He that loves would not forget the object of his love, and he that hates cannot; and so the same result appears from the keenest hatred and the warmest love. The text illustrates this thought. Two classes are here described as following the steps of the Saviour and constantly attending them: those that were attracted to Him because they liked to hear His word; and those who hated Him and His word, and yet, under the spell of an irresistible fascination, could not forsake Him. The Pharisees and scribes were as constant in their attendance as the publicans and sinners who gathered together to hear Him.

I. Why did the publicans and sinners draw near to Christ? (1) First of all—and this is the simplest thought—because He did not frown them away. He did not scorn them, as the Pharisees and scribes did. He was willing to let them come near. (2) The publicans and sinners came near to Christ, not simply because He was willing to allow them to approach Him, but because they heard from Him words which they heard from no one else. They heard Him and marvelled; for He spake as one having authority, and not as the scribes. As it was with Christ, so must it be with the Christian Church, if she would be faithful to her Lord. If we have reached the time when publicans and sinners are afraid to come near us, we have need to look to ourselves and ask the reason.

II. Notice the fascination connected with envy and hatred and opposition that is indicated in this second verse. The Pharisees and scribes, noticing how the publicans came round Christ, murmured. They thought themselves the best people of the day. A very strict sect were they, very observant of all ecclesiastical order, very careful in their observance of the prescribed feasts, very exact in tithing all their property, making their prayers and keeping the feasts very duly. These people thought it a very hard thing, that this man should allow these unlettered, ignorant people to come so close to him. They

said, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." You see there is an intensified charge. It was bad enough to receive them, but it was ten times worse to sit down and eat with them. "That miserable collector of taxes, that apostate Jew, that man who is a badge of submission to Rome—that he should come and be received and allowed to sit down at the same table; and that poor woman—surely if this man were a prophet he would know what manner of woman it is that is touching him—for she is a sinner." That is the spirit of the Pharisees and the scribes. Let us search ourselves, for that spirit is not yet cast out of the Christian Church.

J. EDMUND, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 543.

THE crowds which gathered about our Lord in the course of His mission were eminently representative of the various phases of Jewish life and thought. They consisted of men drawn from all ranks and classes of society. Women and children and stained outcasts are at the least equally among His intimates with social magnates and learned men. There is no discriminating Shibboleth to sift the miscellaneous gathering. No eclectic followers are permitted to check free access to the Master. There is no "fencing of the tables" at which He sits; no rebuff for ignorance; no rejection of humility and wretchedness. The net is cast abroad and its sweep is undiscriminating and universal. Of all these types of society, that of the Pharisee is perhaps the most marked, and the characteristics of it have acquired most popular recognition. We may recognise several distinct ideas associated with it.

I. One is that of exclusiveness or spiritual pride. If there is one great practical lesson, before all others running through the teaching of Christ, and imparting a principle of radical change into the scheme of life, it is summed in these words, "The last shall be first and the first last." This doctrine is the first step in the organisation, so to say, of the kingdom of heaven. This is the first in order of all those paradoxes which constitute the sum of Christianity. It was this which, in the first centuries of its spread, was such an outrage upon society at large, such an enigma to the dispassionate observer, and, as Gibbon has justly observed, was one great element of its triumph. The outcast was no longer an outcast. The despised and rejected of men has become the very pattern of the noblest life. And herein lay the essential antagonism to the spirit which possessed the Pharisee. Exclusion was his ideal.

He clung to it as his heaven-conferred heritage. Christ broke down the walls of partition. The kingdom of heaven came not to a favoured few, not to the elect or the predestinate, but to all.

II. Another note or characteristic of the Pharisaic type is formalism. Formalism may be explained as an exaggerated stress laid upon ceremonial, upon formularies, and upon ordinances—as the elevation, in short, of the mechanism of life in comparison with the life itself. It is not to be supposed that all, or indeed the greater part of those in whom this tendency exists, are making an ostentatious display of righteousness, or are assuming a disguise to cloke their hidden propensities, nor yet that they are themselves conscious of the unsubstantial nature of the manifestations of their religious life. There are but few, I suppose, who do not at times succumb, out of sheer weariness, to the temptation to rest content with seeming instead of being, to substitute a mechanical goodness for genuineness of life, a conventional orthodoxy for the unquiet pursuit of reality. There is a petty and stagnant life, the backwater, so to say, of the enlarged activities and sympathies of the world (a kind of village existence), in which, from the absence of all scale, unessential things assume a factitious importance, and the activity, for want of a nobler outlet, finds vent in trifles. That there is a compatibility of genuine piety, and the most narrow formalism, is a fact which meets us at every turn. But in proportion as knowledge becomes complete, as darkness melts into light, in such proportion are the means and outward expression of life lost sight of, swallowed up in the complete freedom of life itself. This was the lesson of St. Paul to the Judaizers of Galatia. It is not the sacrament, he says; it is not circumcision which availeth aught, it is faith; not the form, but the essence; not the letter that killeth, but the spirit that giveth life—life and liberty, unity of life beneath the multiplicity of forms. And in the recognition of this lies the Christian brotherhood, the veritable communion of saints. If we learn to recognise that this communion is not bounded by the limits of a sect, nor by outward forms, nor by articles of belief, nor by modes of government, but that it is a unity underlying the fragments of Christendom, we shall have been purged of the leaven of the Pharisee, we shall have been made meet to sit down with Christ in the company of publicans and sinners.

C. H. V. DANIEL, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Feb. 26th, 1880.

REFERENCES: xv. 1.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xiv., No. 809;

Homiletic Quarterly, vol. iii., p. 108; *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 52. xv. 1, 2, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 53. xv. 1-7.—H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 18. xv. 1-10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 201; *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 139; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 370; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 346. xv. 1-32.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 229. xv. 2.—T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 63; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 356; T. Birkett Dover, *A Lent Manual*, p. 44; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 219; vol. xi., No. 665; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 239; G. Bainton, *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., p. 250; J. Baird, *The Hallowing of Our Common Life*, p. 77. xv. 3-7.—A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 259. xv. 4.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 223. xv. 4, 5.—*Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 225. xv. 4-6.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 101. xv. 4-7.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxx., No. 1,801; S. A. Brooke, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 345; *Homilist*, new series, vol. i, p. 359. xv. 5.—S. Baring-Gould, *Village Preaching for a Year*, vol. ii., p. 37. xv. 7.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 8.

Chap. xv., ver. 8.—**"Light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently."**

THE Search of Love.

Three parables stand together in this chapter. The occasion of all is one and the same—the murmuring of scribes and Pharisees against the Saviour, who would eat with sinners. And the general drift of all is the same—the feeling of God towards repentant sinners, illustrated by man's feeling towards a possession lost and found. Thus far there is unity—there is even identity—in the three. But no two parables of our Lord are really identical, however like may be the incidents of one to those of another. And so it is here. There is a climax natural and real in the three losses in this chapter. In the first parable the owner of a hundred sheep loses one of them; in the second the owner of ten pieces of silver loses one of them; in the third the father of two sons loses one of them. Now, the second lost thing, though it is less valuable than the first, is to the owner more so. The third is a loss different in kind, and appealing yet more forcibly to the understanding and heart of mankind. There is a climax also in the thing signified. The sheep has strayed in its ignorance from the flock and the pasture. The son exiles himself of self-will and rebelliousness from the home and from the father. Between these two extremes of mere simplicity and utter wilfulness lies the insensate unconciousness of the lost coin.

I. The woman who has lost one of the ten pieces cannot acquiesce and rest in her loss. Little in itself, to her it is vital. She waits not for the light of day, but discovering her loss at night, by night she sets herself to repair it. She lights the

lamp, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she finds it. It is a parable of the love of God. God represents Himself as missing one soul. Little is that soul in itself to the great God. But God would show to us that each one is precious. Each one was separately created; each one has a place designed for it in the universal temple; each one not filling that place leaves a blank. The eye of love misses it, and therefore the hand of love seeks it.

II. The parable goes on to speak of a sweeping. I know it is a homely figure—too homely, perhaps, for some tastes—beneath the dignity, some might say, of the pulpit; only that here Christ has gone before, has written it in His Book, and given it to me for a text. And how wonderful, however homely, is this figure! The love of God first lights up in the world this lamp of revelation, telling man what man could not know; for no man hath ascended up to heaven to read there, in the light of that world, the things that were and that are and that shall be. First this,—the remembering that this light will never fall of itself upon the lost coin, the very loss of which lies in its being out of sight of the man himself. Then, secondly, the love of God sweeps—sweeps, I say, the house, which is the man. You suffered the dust of earth to lie thick upon you—perhaps the amiable dust of kindly sentiment, of satisfied affection; or perhaps the ugly dust of eager grasping, of predominant self, of overmastering passion; and so, evading the illumination, you necessitated the sweeping. It was the love of God still.

III. The love of God will seek diligently till it find. Marvellous word! Record at once of difficulty and perseverance. How much is repaired ere the finding be accomplished! To find the lost soul is not easy. The whole work of sanctification is wrapped up in it. Every thought has to be brought into captivity; every motive has to be elevated. Objects indifferent once, or distasteful, are to be made the aim of the life; and that holiness, which to fallen man is repugnant, must be cultivated for a purpose to fallen man repulsive—that he may at last see God. This is the meaning of that diligent search by which love at last shall find; for without success love cannot live. Love cannot sleep till its object be accomplished. No toil is too great, may she but attain.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 832.

REFERENCES: xv. 8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 352; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 84; *Expository Sermons on the New Testament*, p. 86.

Chap. xv., vers. 8-10.

THE piece of silver—whatever it was—was great to the owner. And here lies the point in the analogy. A soul, an individual creature, an atom in God's universe, may be in itself a very insignificant thing, but it is great to God. This is its dignity. How great, how dear to God, no man can adequately judge, because no man is a creator, and no man is a redeemer. It needs absolutely to have created a thing, and absolutely to have redeemed a thing, before you can calculate what its worth would be to one who stood to it in those relations. Let us go with this woman in her quest. It is deliberate, painstaking, protracted, effectual.

I. First she lights a candle—the well-known emblem in the Bible, of three things: first, the Spirit of God in a man's soul; second, the word of God; third, the consistent lives of ministers and other servants of God. And these three together make the great detective force, and so ultimately the great restorative power, which God uses in this world.

II. With the lighted candle, the woman went to sweep the house. In the parable of the shepherd, the sheep was gone out into the wilderness. Here, the lost one was still in the house. It seems to me more affecting to be a lost soul in the house, than to be a lost soul out in the wilderness. It is a great commotion and disturbance to sweep, but then it leads to cleanliness and order. So God's sweepings are severe things. But then it is only to brush away what had no right to be there. You will not presently complain, you will not regret the turmoil—when the costly thing, that was almost hidden—sparkles again in the hand of its great Proprietor.

III. All the parables agree in the one blessed, crowning thought—"till she find it." It is not a light achievement. Even with the lighted candle, and with the close sweeping, she had to seek diligently—to go up and down, and do her work over and over again. But love—the love she had for her lost treasure, carried her on, and she did not stop, she could not stop, till she found it.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermon preached* Oct. 29th, 1865.

MAN'S Fall God's Loss.

I. The first division of the picture in this parable represents God as contemplating as a loss to Himself the state of sin into which man has fallen. God had a property of the heart in man's welfare: He had created him holy, like Himself. When

sin waylaid man, cast him down, stripped him, and robbed him, and left him for dead, God was as one bereaved.

II. In the second part of the picture God is represented as making an effort for the recovery of man from the sin and misery into which he has fallen. God will not let His human treasure go without an effort to recover it—a persistent effort to recover it. This is the chief and abounding meaning of the second part of the picture. This is the gospel which has been ringing clear above the world's sin and trouble for ages. There is no one point, as I understand the teaching of Christ, so urgently insisted upon in that teaching, and so much impressed upon the mind and heart of the world, as this idea of God seeking for His children. The more one seeks to look at this, the more one feels how true it is that the inflexible righteousness of God, that the infinite love of God, is full of a determination not to let His human treasure go without an effort to recover it. This is the key of history.

III. The third point is that, God and the good angels rejoice in heaven over the recovery of man. It is often represented that the angels rejoice, and they do; but the Father rejoices first, and with an alert and subtle sympathy the angels catch the influence of the Divine joy as the high mountain tops catch the early rays of the rising sun. God's heart is the centre of the joy. See who the separate parts of the picture answer to one another. There is the first, the householder weeping for her lost piece of money, then searching for the piece, then rejoicing over the recovery: that is to say, God contemplating man's sin as a personal loss, God putting forth effort for His creature's recovery, and God rejoicing over his recovery, and the empty place in His Divine heart filled again.

A. HANNAY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 113.

REFERENCES: xv. 8-10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 970; C. Stanford, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 136; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 385; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 32; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 274; G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 27.

Chap. xv., ver. 10.—**"Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."**

THE Brightness of Penitence.

The ordinary law of sympathy—"to weep with those that weep"—is naturally suspended in this instance. When our weeping is for our sins, the angels are glad over us. For,

indeed, then our sorrow is not the chief thing that happens to us, but only an accidental accompaniment of what is happening. Our word Repentance carries with it certainly a sorrowful sound, but the Greek original name for Repentance has not the least touch of sorrow in its associations, but signifies only that grand change of the mind, with its aims and thoughts, its reflections and its activities, which is the real essence of Repentance.

I. The angel, perhaps, could not sorrow in sympathy with a sorrow which was nothing but deserved retribution; but he rejoices with all the joy of his intense nature over the sorrow which works such a miracle. And this joy of the angels is not theirs only. It soon echoes back to earth again, and fills the heart of him who is repenting. He rejoices over his own sorrow.

II. Many kinds of necessary renunciation are accompanied by sorrowfulness, and make themselves felt with bitterness, but not so the renunciation of sin. True to human nature, the great artist draws his Antigone, as she passes to her death for what was no crime, sorrowing most acutely for the life and light she leaves behind her, for the wedded love and the love of children, and her aspirations for a diviner justice all unfulfilled. She would stoop to no baseness, but that did not make her joyous. She would die for her right, but sorrow is king over all and after all. Self-conquest is noble, but you must add something to self-conquest to make you joyful. The world is certainly not a home for immortal souls, but they that renounce it must have something else to look for before they can be happy. And what is this something else which gives life to self-conquest and glory to self-renunciation? It is Faith, the Faith which explains to you what you have found in exchange for that which you have given up; the Faith which assures you that your returning is not your own work, but that you have been loved and sought and found at last by a higher power and a more devoted being than you have known before.

ARCHBISHOP BENSON, *Boy Life: Sundays in Wellington College*, p. 130.

THE words are Christ's own; not those of prophet or priest, or excited orator, saying a poetic thing not to be construed literally. We must take the words as soberly true. There are beings somewhere, higher than men, a little higher, creatures of God Almighty, good and kind beings, who feel a real interest in our leaving off to do evil and beginning to do well.

I. The joy spoken of in the text is, broadly speaking, the triumph of right over wrong. A tide of true gladness spreads

through the Paradise of God, when it is known there that a human being, who can make his choice, who must make his choice, between life and death, between good and evil, has chosen life and good. We are not surprised at all that the angels rejoice over one repenting sinner. We have witnessed, many times, the same sort of feeling here. Every good man and woman who comes to know of it is appreciably gladdened when old or young, who has been wrong, honestly determines and tries to be right. Not only is this the best reason why any of us should be glad: probably, in a little while, it will seem the only one. After all differences are forgotten, there will abide, as the one vital and eternal difference—just right or wrong—on God's side or no. And no human soul that is on the wrong side can ever be other than (in the long-run) miserable. We must be brought to God; or it can never be well with us, here or anywhere.

II. Notice several reasons for the rejoicing of the angels. When a sinner turns to God, here is the saving from utter destruction of a thing of inestimable value. (2) In a soul brought to God the angels behold a being capable of being infinitely happy or miserable, and all this for time without end, brought to the right side of the line between happiness and misery. (3) The angels, we may well believe, rejoice at the salvation of a sinner, because in that they see an exemplification of the successful working of the grand machinery of Redemption. As some special friend of some great inventor would watch with joy the triumph of the engine he had thought out, even so (comparing spiritual things with earthly) we can imagine the angels looking on with earnest interest at the grand instrumentality of Redemption at its work in this world, and gladdened whensoever another soul saved shows it is doing the work it was meant for.

A. K. H. B., *From a Quiet Place*, p. 154.

REFERENCES: xv. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 203 W. Cunningham, *Sermons*, p. 20; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iv. p. 600, *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 274; D. Moore, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 210; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. i., p. 45; Todd, *Lectures to Children*, p. 20.

Chap. xv., ver. 11.—"A certain man had two sons."

THE Fatherland.

I. Of all God's cords the finest, and perhaps the strongest,

is the cord of love. The true home of humanity is God—God trusted, communed with, beloved, obeyed.

II. Far from home, humanity is still in the hand of God. Not only is it subject to His righteous and irresistible sovereignty, but it has a place in His deep and desirous compassion.

III. It would be rash to say that where the home is right the inmates never go wrong. Still, the promises to believers include their children, and the instances are anomalous and few where a hopeful outset ends in a worthless old age. In order to make your home the preparation for heaven, the first thing is to strengthen that cord of love by which you ought to hold your child, even as our heavenly Father holds His children.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 261.

THE Parable of the Prodigal Son. Regarding the son here as a type of man, and the father as a type of God, as He is seen in His Son and set forth in the Gospel, let us now study these, the two prominent figures in this beautiful parable, beginning with the prodigal.

I. His conduct. In the condition of the prodigal we have a picture of the misery into which sin, having estranged us from our heavenly Father, has plunged its wretched votaries. Type of the sinner who departs from God, and a beacon to such as feel irksome under the restraints of a pious home, he seeks happiness only to find misery: ambitious of an unhallowed liberty, he sinks into the condition of the basest slave.

II. His change of mind. Sin is here represented as a madness; and who acts so contrary to sound reason, his own interests and the reality of things, as a sinner? Happy such as through the Spirit of God, working by whatever means, have come to themselves, like the prodigal; and are seated, like the maniac who dwelt among the tombs, at the feet of Jesus clothed and in their right mind.

III. His distress. "I perish," he said, "with hunger."

IV. His belief. "Behind yonder blue hills, away in the dim distance, lies my father's house—a house of many mansions, and such full supplies that the servants, even the hired servants, have bread enough and to spare."

V. His resolution. "I will arise and go to my father." Remove the prodigal, and setting conscience on the bench, let us take his place. No prodigal ever sinned against an earthly, as we have done against our heavenly Father. Well,

therefore, may we go to Him, with the contrition of the prodigal in our hearts and his confession on our lips:—"Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight." The Spirit of God helping us thus to go to God, be assured that the father, who, seeing his son afar off, ran to meet him, fell on his neck and kissed him, was but an image of Him who, not sparing His own Son, but giving Him up to death that we might live, invites and now waits your coming.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 57.

THE Father.

I. How the father received his son. As soon as the wanderer is recognised, on flying feet the old man runs to meet him; and ere the son has time to speak a word, the father has him in his arms, presses him to his bosom, and covering his cheek with passionate kisses, lifts up his voice and weeps for joy. And this is God—God as He is drawn by the hand and seen in the face of Him whom He sent to seek and save us, to bring us back, to open a way of reconciliation,—the God who, unwilling that any should perish, invites and waits our coming.

II. How the father treated the prodigal. The ring he gave him signifies here the espousals between Christ and His Church; it may be the token of her marriage, the passport of those who are blessed to go to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (2) The naked foot was a sign of servitude. Therefore the order to put shoes on his feet was tantamount to the declaration from the father's lips that the prodigal was not to be regarded as a servant, but as a son; that to him belonged all the privileges and possessions of sonship; that he who had never lost his place in the father's heart was now to resume it at his table and in his house.

III. How the father rejoiced over the prodigal. Grief retires from observation; joy must have vent. In this parable, so true in all its parts to nature, this feature of joy stands beautifully out. To these servants the father had never told his grief; but now the prodigal is come back, and his heart is bursting with joy, he tells them of it. So God rejoices in His ransomed; and let them rejoice in Him. The sun that shines on you shall set, and summer streams shall freeze, and deepest wells go dry—but not His love. His love is a stream that never freezes, a fountain that never fails, a sun that never sets

in night, a shield that never breaks in fight: whom He loveth, He loveth to the end.

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 77.

REFERENCES: xv. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 420; *Homilist*, new series, vol. ii., p. 50. xv. 11-13.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 140; *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 78. xv. 11-24.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. xiii., p. 199; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 373; H. Batchelor, *The Incarnation of God*, p. 25. xv. 11-32.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 268; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 137; J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 234; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 390; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 48; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 280. xv. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol ii., p. 253.

Chap. xv., ver. 13.—"The younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country," etc.

I. WHEN principle is weak the far country is fatal. If any one is obliged to leave home—not from love of idleness, not from love of pleasure, not from love of liberty, but on such business as brings young men to our large towns every day—do not forget that God is here.

II. The portion of goods which fell to the prodigal must have been a handsome patrimony, and it would have been his wisdom to wait for it till the proper time. But with indecent haste he forestalled his reversion, and what he obtained so easily he quickly fooled away. Daily bread costs little, but dainties are dear, and are never so costly as when they are gifts from the devil.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 287.

RIOTOUS Living.

I. Pleasant as is the lot of our inheritance, it is well to remember that the thickets and steep places are haunted. Frightful ogres frequent them, and they are sure to sally forth on the heedless wanderer. The names of three of the best known are: The Lust of the Eye, the Lust of the Flesh, and the Pride of Life; or, as they are sometimes called—Vanity, or the love of display; Sensuality, or the love of low pleasure; and the Affectation of Fashion, or the keeping-up of appearances.

II. If you would pass innocently through a difficult world keep within the rules. Let your life be open, your eye single, your walk in the broad light of day. To the great temptations

the great antidote is not a limited income so much as a large self-denial.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 300.

REFERENCES: xv. 13.—J. Bainton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 220; *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 220; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 143.

Chap. xv., ver. 14.—"And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want."

I. ALL may be lost by one transgression. The heart of this young man died away from his home. That home ceased to be sacred: the father was no longer paramount. Grace was gone. Prayer was given up. Good feelings faded, and now that temptation and combustible corruption came together, he was soon set on fire of hell.

II. In the figurative language of the parable, there arose in the far country a mighty famine. Extravagance soon brings the "noble to ninepence," and in the far country it is not far that ninepence will go. But there may be so mighty a famine and so great, that even the noble will not buy the loaf of bread. Of all the paths which at life's outset invite the inexperienced traveller, the surest to pierce through with many sorrows is the path of sensual indulgence.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 313.

REFERENCE: xv. 14.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 419.

Chap. xv., vers. 15, 16.—"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine," etc.

I. WHETHER it be a natural nobleness, or an acquired refinement,—the one, the direct gift of God; the other, an indirect creation of the Gospel—it is seldom forfeited all at once. Step by step the downward path is trodden, till at last the prodigal's snatching tit-bits from the swine-trough shows how thorough is the transformation since he fell from his old estate.

II. If self-seeking can never be successful—if separation from God is the death of the soul—if carelessness about other's welfare, not to say misanthropy is misery, there can be little difficulty in deciding what is life and joy and peace. Love to Christ, harmony with God—these are happiness.

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 325.

REFERENCE: xv. 15, 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 373.

Chap. xv., ver. 17.—"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"

THERE are two tests to which we have a right to submit every new religion. There are two questions which we have a right, and which it is our duty, to put to every one who claims to come to us as a teacher from God. And these two questions are: (1) "What have you to tell us concerning the nature of God?" and, (2) "What have you to tell us concerning the nature of man?" Now, of these tests it is clear which is the simplest and most easy to apply: obviously the second. We do know the nature of man, or think we do. Of the Divine nature we are necessarily and naturally in comparative ignorance. We do know something of human life, and of its circumstances; and, therefore, he who tells us that concerning man's nature which we know to be untrue has lost his claim upon our attention when he goes on to tell us something concerning God.

I. Consider, in the light of this test, as regards its theory of humanity, the religion of the Bible. There is a theory concerning man's nature and condition on which the whole of this book, and all it professes to teach us, is based. I bring this religion to the test of one admitted and notorious fact in the nature and condition of man, in order to see how it explains that fact, and how it proposes to deal with it. The fact is the admitted and notorious fact of the exceptional unhappiness of man. Our Lord, in this parable, confronts Himself with this fact, as every teacher of the Gospel, or good news, must do if he is to win the attention of men. The hero of this story, the prodigal son, is, as you see, a sufferer; but he is more than that, he is an exceptional sufferer. All the other creatures described in the parable—the lower servants of the father—have bread and to spare; he alone suffers hunger. And more than that, he is a strangely exceptional sufferer, for he who suffers is infinitely superior to those who are happy. All animals that we know of, save man, seem to be subject to this twofold law. Each animal has its instincts, its desires, its appetites, and in the climate or element in which it exists there are corresponding objects of gratification for those appetites and those desires. Man is pained from two different sources—one is the pain of satiety, and the other the pain of remorse. Give the man all the portion of goods that can fall to him, or

that in his wildest dreams of covetousness or ambition he can desire for himself; when he has enjoyed these to the very full, and just because he has enjoyed them, there begins to be felt a famine in his enjoyment, and there does come the weariness of satiety into his heart and soul.

II. The Bible theory of man is this, that he is not his true self, that he is a creature not in his proper and true element. It tells us that it has been the curse and the disorganisation of the nature of man, that in the exercise of the strange and mysterious spiritual power—free will, he has wandered away from the Father's home, and claimed the selfish and solitary possession of the goods that the Father lavished upon him; it tells us that the origin of all human sin and sorrow has been this, that he has said, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. The Bible tells us that misery is the result of this vain effort of man to do in this world of God without the God who made him; that all his misery, his weariness, is but the sublime discontent of the soul that was made to rest in its God, and cannot rest in anything less than God.

III. Our religion is a historical religion. It bases itself upon one life in the past, it is ever renewing and revealing itself in many lives ever since that life was lived on earth. It bases itself on one life, and that life was a perfect life, the life of one who, all through His existence, as far as we know it, was a life unstained by impurity, a life unvexed and unharassed by sensual or evil impulses, it was a life that was passed in entire and complete obedience to the will of the Father. The life that He lived, that perfect life of obedience—for which all its sorrow only came from without, and only came from the fact that all around Him were not like Him, equally obedient—that life, He tells us, He can supernaturally give to us, "I am come that ye might have life, and that ye might have it more abundantly."

ARCHBISHOP MAGEE, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Dec. 2nd, 1880.

WE take the text as something to remind us that we have fallen far, but not hopelessly; that, great as is our present depression beneath the condition which our race was created, so great may yet be our rise; and that the very end and purpose of all Christ's work and suffering in this world, was to bring us back to our better selves; to restore us to the holiness, happiness, and peace, which man lost when man fell. Let us

remember that the human race was itself when it was at its best. Man was himself before he fell. We were created in God's image, and our fall brought us into a state of sin and misery.

I. As for sin, you know there is a double burden there. Two things go to make the burden of our sinfulness: original sin, and the countless actual sins we have done. Our first parents had no inherited burden of guilt. They started fair. We do not. They had not to bear that load which all of us have to bear; that load which crushes down so many of our race, and which many a one has hardly a hope of escaping. Now, what we need as regards all this is to be brought back to our better self; brought back to where human nature was before it fell; and Christ, in His great atoning work, does that. He puts His redeemed ones so effectually in that condition, that they can never leave it again. Not the unstable and speedily lost purity of the days in Eden; but an enduring, an irrefragable holiness, never to be lost more.

II. The Fall brought us also into an estate of misery. And we remember from childhood the sad but too true tale of the items that make up human misery. Looking back, we discern a day when it was different. Once man walked in communion with God, and was free and happy in that communion. In his unfallen state, Adam would not have known what any one meant who had spoken to him of the wrath and curse of God; and least of all would he have been able to understand, till sad experience taught him, what is meant by the pangs of an accusing conscience—what is meant by the burden of remorse. And now let us thankfully mark that the Redeemer takes away, even here, in part, and fully hereafter, each of these things that go to make the sum of the sorrow into which man came when he fell. The manifold ills and trials of life may still remain; but even in this world He lightens them, takes the worst sting from them; do but trust Him as we ought, and God will keep him in perfect peace "whose mind is stayed upon Himself," and even where these ills and cares are most heavily felt, the Holy Spirit makes them work together for the soul's true good.

A. K. H. B., *Counsel and Comfort from a City Pulpit*, p. 55.

THE Hunger of the Soul.

The truth here expressed is this: that a life separated from God is a life of bitter hunger, or even of spiritual starvation.

I. Consider the true grounds of the fact stated; for as we discover how and for what reasons the life of sin must be a life of hunger, we shall see the more readily and clearly the force of those illustrations by which the fact is exhibited. The great principle that underlies the whole subject and all the facts pertaining to it is, that the soul is a creature that wants food, in order to its satisfaction, as truly as the body. No principle is more certain, and yet there is none so generally overlooked, or hidden from the sight of men. Our blessed Lord appears to have always the feeling that He has come down into a realm of hungry, famishing souls. You see this in the parable of the prodigal son, and that of the feast or supper. Hence, also, that very remarkable discourse in John vi., where He declares Himself as the living Bread that came down from heaven; that a man may eat thereof and not die. It is the grand endeavour of the Gospel to communicate God to men. They have undertaken to live without Him, and do not see that they are starving in the bitterness of their experiment. When Christ is received, He restores the consciousness of God, fills the soul with the Divine light, and sets it in that connection with God which is life—eternal life.

II. Consider the necessary hunger of a state of sin, and the tokens by which it is indicated. A hungry herd of animals, waiting the time of their feeding, do not show their hunger more convincingly, by their impatient cries and eager looks and motions, than the human race do theirs, in the works, and ways, and tempers of their selfish life. I can only point out a few of these demonstrations. (1) The common endeavour to make the body receive double, so as to satisfy both itself and the soul too, with its pleasures. Hence the drunkenness, and high feasting, and crimes of excess. Men are hungry everywhere, and they compel the body to make a swine's heaven for the comfort of the godlike soul. (2) Again, we see the hunger of sin by the immense number of drudges there are in the world. It makes little difference generally whether men are poor or rich. Some terrible hunger is upon them, and it drives them madly forward, through burdens, and sacrifices, and toils that would be rank oppression put upon a slave. (3) Notice, again, how many contrive in one way and another, to get, if possible, some food of content for the soul that has a finer and more fit quality than the swine's food with which they so often overtask the body—honour, power, admiration, flattery, society, literary accomplishments. The Spirit of God will sometimes

show us, in an unwonted manner, the secret of these troubles, for He is the Interpreter of the soul's troubles. He comes to it whispering inwardly the awful secret of its pains—"Without God and without hope in the world." He bids the swineherd look up from his sensual object and works, and remember his home and his Father; tells him of a great supper prepared, and that all things are now ready, and bids him come. Conscious of that deep poverty he is in; conscious of that immortal being whose deep wants have been so long denied; he hears a gentle voice of love saying, "I am that Bread of life . . . I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this Bread, he shall live."

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 32.

REFERENCES: xv. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 1,000; J. Thain Davidson, *Forewarned—Forearmed*, p. 247; J. Jacob, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 63; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 66; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 436; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 473; W. Hay Aitken, *Mission Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 139; *Ibid.*, 2nd series, p. 139. xv. 17-19. —J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 220; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 85.

Chap. xv., ver. 18.—"I will arise and go to my father."

I. NOTE the awaking or arising of the soul out of sheer worldliness into a condition of godliness. A life of worldliness is unmanly, for it falls short of that for which man's capacities plainly indicate that he was born. It is undutiful, for it withholds from the Father of our spirits the trust and love and gratitude we owe to Him It is perilous, for even if we make no account of the direct retributions of the great day of judgment, the spirit of the worldly man is being trained and moulded into a character which will be lasting as his being, and will render him for ever unfit for the society of God and His Holy One.

II. I will arise out of this condition of estrangement, and seek reconciliation with my Father. God is the Creator, we are His creatures. He is the King, we are His subjects. But above all He is the Father, we are His children. It is no longer a philosophic and wild speculation, but the most certain and of practical truths, that God and man are Father and child. But it is likewise a truth certified by many signs, and above all, by our own consciousness, that the tie between this Father and child has been somehow broken. That we do not trust, that we do not love, that we do not obey, we know too well. We

are in a state of estrangement from our Father, and such a state must ever be both criminal and miserable. Its consequences, if not averted by a timely healing of the breach, must be eternally disastrous. Say, with the Son in the parable, "I have sinned." The Father whom you have wronged so grievously, whose deep displeasure you have incurred, has not ceased to love you. He sees the misery to which you have reduced yourselves; He waits and watches for the first sign of your awaking to a sense of your sin, and He will welcome you back to His home.

J. KENNEDY, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 289.

Chap. xv., vers. 18, 19.

I. THESE words contain consolation. It is the *prodigal* who speaks them. None can say, "By some course of thought or action of mine, I have excluded myself from the right to use them." It is the prodigal son who speaks them. None can say, "I must make myself a son; I must establish my relationship to God before I claim the full sense and virtue of them."

II. These words contain every satisfaction which those want whose minds have been staggered with doubts as to whether the world is not left to the mercy of the power of evil. In the last century the Lisbon earthquake led Rousseau to write his letters on Optimism. He was nearly mad already. It would have driven him actually mad not to think that all things were somehow tending to good; that even the worst calamities befalling the innocent did not prove that theory to be false. The philosopher of Ferney answered him in the story of Candide. The notion "everything is for the best," applied to particulars, was exhibited as utterly ridiculous. Madame de Staël may have been right in describing this story as the grinning of an ape at the miseries of humanity. But there was much in it which the understandings, even the consciences, of men felt to be true. A general maxim or theory of the universe does not meet individual cases. It breaks down the moment the particular instance occurs to which we need that it should be applied. Whence comes our horror of such evils, our consciousness of something directly, absolutely, opposed to them? Did civilisation give these ideas? Do they constitute civilisation? Is not civilisation apart from them a name and a fiction, or else a synonym for the habits that weaken and impair manliness, courage, the reverence for women, sincerity, justice? Whence,

then, are these? Is there not, must there not be a Father of spirits from whom they issue forth, in whom they dwell perfectly, absolutely? There is no experience so individual as that of moral evil; when we feel that we need such a God as Jesus Christ has revealed to us to be a Deliverer from that, we know that what is most blessed for the world is most blessed also for us.

F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 235.

CHRISTIAN Repentance.

I. Observe that the prodigal son said, "I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." We know that God's service is perfect freedom, not a servitude; but this is in the case of those who have long served Him; at first it *is* a kind of servitude, it is a task till our likings and tastes come to be in unison with those which God has sanctioned. We *must begin* religion with what looks like a form. Our fault will be, not in beginning it as a form, but in continuing it as a form; for it is our duty to be ever striving and praying to enter into the real spirit of our services; and in proportion as we understand them and love them they will cease to be a form and a task, and will be the real expression of our minds. Thus shall we gradually be changed in heart from servants to sons of Almighty God.

II. Consider the motives which actuate the repentant sinner in his endeavours to serve God. One of the most natural, and among the first that arise in the mind, is that of propitiating Him. When we are conscious to ourselves of having offended another, and wish to be forgiven, of course we look about for some *means* of setting ourselves right with Him. And this holds good when applied to the case of sinners desiring forgiveness from God. The marks of His mercy all around us are strong enough to inspire us with some general hope. Under these circumstances it is *natural* that the conscience-striken sinner should look round him for some atonement with which to meet his God. But now, turning to the parable of the prodigal son, we find nothing of this kind in it. The truth is, that our Saviour has shown us in all things a more perfect way than was ever before shown to man. The most noble repentance, the most decorous conduct in a conscious sinner, is an unconditional surrender of himself to God; not a bargaining, not a scheming to be received back again, but an instant surrender of himself in the first instance. God indeed meets us on the way with the tokens of His favour, and so He bears

up human faith, which else would sink under the apprehension of meeting the Most High God; still, for our repentance to be Christian, there must be in it that generous temper of self-surrender, the acknowledgment that we are unworthy to be called any more His sons, the abstinence from all ambitious hopes of sitting on His right hand or His left, and the willingness to bear the heavy yoke of bond-servants, if He should put it upon us.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 90.

REFERENCES: xv. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 113; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 49; J. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ix., p. 288; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 86; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 29; *Ibid.*, 9th series, p. 173. xv. 18, 19.—G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 73; R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 212.

Chap. xv., vers. 20-4.

THE Hunger of the Soul.

I. Why did God make it so natural for us all to grieve over the past, and to lament so bitterly for sin? One way of looking at the matter may be suggestive to us all. Does it not seem as if this same penitence and sorrow for misdoings were like to the pains of hunger in the body, which at once tells of weakness and waste and toil, and which at the same time prompts us to seek for refreshment and renewal of our fasting. But for the pangs of hunger urging us to eat, the human race would disappear infallibly; the pain that is so terrible is the very cause of our continuing to live. And such a pain is it which the remembrance of sin arouses; it, too, tells of a waste that has been going on within; the waste of blessings on the right hand and on the left; the waste of spiritual purity and faith and earnestness; the loss of spiritual strength and devotion; the want of strenuous zeal for truth; the wear and tear which the frivolities and vices of the world around us must infallibly produce upon us all; but it is a pain which God gives us, not it may be painful and no more, but that its painfulness may tell us of an evil state of things, and not suffer us to be content therewith.

II. Therefore, if on you there comes at times, as God grant there may:—

> "A sense of emptiness, without the sense
> Of an abiding fulness anywhere;"

a sense of weariness and self-reproach as you see to how little

purpose you have lived; a sense of pain and grief as you reflect how you have been mastered in the evil language and bad passions that tempt us all to wrong;—then thank God for the pain and shame and penitence, and do not strive to check it, or forget it, or drive it off. Arise, and go to your Father, "and say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son."

A. JESSOPP, *Norwich School Sermons*, p. 201.

A HAPPY Meeting.

I. God is infinitely holy, and sin is His abhorrence. But the great sin is departure from the living God, and this never ceases till you return. And if you yourself long to be holy, it is in forgiveness that the fresh start, the new obedience, begins; if you would escape from the bondage of corruption, you must retreat into the home of God and gain the glorious liberty of His children.

II. The relation which the Most High sustains to His intelligent and accountable creatures is too comprehensive and too intimate to be perfectly imaged by any earthly tie; but in the relation which runs through this parable it finds its nearest equivalent. And what among ourselves is fatherhood? It is the relation which identifies greatness with littleness; it is the relation which lives in the loved one's joy or honour, and which is wounded in his grief or disgrace; which feels no pride like a son's promotion; which delights in being trusted, and which desires to be loved in return. Wonderful is parental affection, and wonderful the love of God. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 351.

REFERENCES: xv. 20.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,189; vol. x., No. 588; vol. iv., No. 176; J. Keble, *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 442. xv. 21.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 29. xv. 22.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 129; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 99. xv. 22, 23.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,204.

Chap. xv., vers. 23, 24.

THE Festival.

I. The feast which here took place denotes "the joy of a forgiving God over a forgiven man, and the joy of a forgiven man in a forgiving God." The one is a gracious revelation, the other a blessed experience, and each reacts upon the other. To a forthgoing affectionate nature it is a joy to be trusted;

to a holy nature it is a joy to create righteousness and arrest evil, and in the case of every soul that is saved such is the joy of God.

II. There is a Divine delicacy in the ways of God. He does not clog His Gospel with conditions, nor is the joy of forgiveness dashed by formal stipulations as to future conduct. He would have you be, not a hired servant, but a son. He will not vex you by repeating, too often, "Son, go!" Nevertheless, knowing as you do the will of your Father, and merely saying "I go, Sir," without stirring a step, can you wonder that He is grieved at His heart? Can you wonder if your consolations are small? J. HAMILTON, *Works*, vol. ii., p. 378.

REFERENCES: xv. 24.—H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 161; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 1 *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 13.

Chap. xv., ver. 25.—"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing."

WE may see from this passage:—

I. That the position of the elder son is preferable to that of the younger, because of the risk he escaped.

II. Because a life of continuous godliness is far easier than a life of godliness succeeding a life of sin.

III. Viewed as a whole, the life of the son who remained at home must yield far more pleasure to God than the life of the son who wanders and then returns.

E. MELLOR, *In the Footsteps of Heroes*, p. 195.

REFERENCES: xv. 25.—J. Burton, *Christian Life and Truth*, p. 398. xv. 25, 29.—D. Thomas, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 184 xv. 25-32.—G. Cross, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 350; *Homilist*, vol. i., p. 342.

Chap. xv., ver. 29.—"Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends."

CONTRACTED Views in Religion.

I. In the conduct of the father, there seemed, at first sight, an utter departure from the rules of fairness and justice. Here was a reprobate son received into his favour on the first stirrings of repentance. What was the use of serving him dutifully, if there were no difference in the end between the righteous and the wicked? The elder brother's case seemed a hard one; and that, even without supposing him to feel jealous,

or to have unsuitable notions of his own importance and usefulness. Apply this to the case of religion, and it still holds good. At first sight, the reception of the penitent sinner seems to interfere with the reward of the faithful servant of God. The words of the text are the expression of an agitated mind, that fears lest it be cast back upon the wide world, to grope in the dark without a God to guide and encourage it in its course.

II. The condescending answer of the Father in the parable is most instructive. It sanctions the great truth which seemed in jeopardy, that it is *not* the same thing in the end to obey or to disobey, expressly telling us that the Christian penitent is not placed on the same footing with those who have consistently served God from the first. "Son, thou art ever with me; and all that I have is thine;"—that is, "Why this sudden fear and distrust? Surely thou hast known me too long to suppose that *thou* canst lose by thy brother's gain. *Thou* art in my confidence. I do not make any outward display of kindness towards *thee*, for it is a thing to be taken for granted."

III. The elder brother had always lived at home; he had seen things go on one way, and, as was natural and right, got attached to them in that one way. But then, he could not conceive that they could possibly go on in any other way; when an occurrence took place for which he had hitherto met no precedent he lost himself, as being thrust suddenly out of the contracted circle in which he had hitherto walked. He was disconcerted and angry with his father. And so, in religion, we have need to watch against that narrowness of mind, to which we are tempted by the uniformity and tranquillity of God's providence towards us. Let us guard against discontent in any shape, and as we cannot help hearing what goes on in the world, let us guard, on hearing it, against all intemperate, uncharitable feelings towards those who differ from us, or oppose us.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 182.

REFERENCE: xv. 29.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 291.

Chap. xv., ver. 31.—"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."

WHAT is the moral significance of the incident of the Elder Son?

I. It is, some writers tell us, to mark the contrast between the narrow, merciless heart of the self-righteous man, as compared with the comprehensive, all-forgiving love of our heavenly Father. He who had been most sinned against—he whose the property had been which a profligate son had wasted—was

ready to forgive; the other, far less injured, had only words of discontent and anger for his father's large-hearted mercy. It is possible that this contrast was intended, but I am sure it is not the principal purpose of the incident.

II. To determine what that significance really is, let us consider in the first place what the series of parables would be without it. Let us suppose that this series ended with the loving—even enthusiastic—reception of the younger son a this father's house. Might not the thought then be suggested. "If it be true that a profligate who repents is more pleasing in the sight of God than one who has led a consistently virtuous life, is it not better that I should do as this young man did? "This was the thought which passed through the mind of the elder son. The father's reply seems to have been intended to correct an erroneous inference which might, not unnaturally, be drawn, and which the elder son did actually draw. It is in its tone rather soothing than reproachful, meant to correct a mistake, and so to remove the anger which this mistake had caused; but not, as far as I can see, condemning the anger as at all unreasonable under the mistake. The Author of these parables foresaw that men might draw from them the false but not unnatural inference, that God prefers deep sinfulness, followed by true repentance, to a continuance in well-doing. To prevent such a mistake, this very objection is put into the mouth of the elder son. And in the reply of the father is fixed the true position of the repentant sinner. He is received with forgiveness, with welcome, with joy; but he does not take, in the estimation of his heavenly Father, the place of him "who by patient continuance in well-doing seeks for glory and honour and immortality."

J. H. JELLETT, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xv. 31.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 375; *Sermons from Lent to Passiontide*, p. 451; J. Ferrier, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 211; G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 115. xv. 32.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 86. E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 178. xv.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of The Twelve*, p. 27; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 233. xvi. 1.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, p. 18. xvi. 1-8.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 346; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 377; C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 356. xvi. 1-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 345. xvi. 1-10.—H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 266; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 355. xvi. 1-12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, p. 503; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 34; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 19; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 427.

Chap. xvi., ver. 2.—"Give an account of thy stewardship; for thou mayest be no longer steward."

We are God's stewards our whole life long: each day of our lives, therefore, claims its own account; each year, as it passes, suggests to us naturally such reflections, since we reckon our life by years. To many thoughtful men their own birthdays have been days of solemn self-examination. To many, the last day of the civil year brings a like reminder. Indeed, popular language recognises in it something of this power.

I. While our life is full of vigour, such anniversaries, however, invite us to look forward as well as backward. The end of an old year is the beginning of a new one. To look back is for a Christian to repent, since the best of us is but a sinner before God; but repentance should bear fruit in new life. And if we have abused God's gifts in the past year, the approaching festival of Christmas with the whole train of holy seasons that follow one after another, and bringing manifold reminders of God's love to man, tells us that there is help in heaven, help ready for us on the earth, if we will even now turn to God and amend our lives. Advent, Christmas, Passiontide, Easter, Ascension Day, are not only thankful commemorations before God of glorious things done for us in past time; they are not only settings forth before man of great events of which we might neglect to read, or read carelessly, in Scripture. They serve to remind us also of a God, ever-living and ever-present, able and willing to renew to us daily those great blessings which our Lord lived and died on earth to win for us all.

II. But as anniversaries multiply upon us, as the years behind us are many, the years to come few in comparison, my text has a meaning for us which deepens continually—a meaning which cannot but force itself on the attention of those who avoid generally serious thoughts. The end of life is in very deed the end of our stewardship. We know little of the existence appointed for us between death and judgment. Little has been told us, except in brief and momentous outline of that which is to come after the Judgment Day. But we have no reason to think that in either there will be room for further probation for use or misuse of gifts and opportunities. As we draw near to the end of this earthly life our thoughts are apt to retrace the space which we have crossed. We find that we have done little, far less than we might have done, because our own indolence made us decline the task, or private aims warped and

marred our public action. And yet another question remains which we put to ourselves as we look back on our past life. How have we done our duty to God in it? Ability to know God and to serve Him is one portion assuredly of our stewardship; and as we draw near to the end of life, we cannot but ask ourselves how we have used it. We alone know—I do not say that we ourselves know perfectly—whether we have sought to draw near to God, to know, serve, and love Him in real earnest. In the retrospect of which I have been speaking, there is more of sadness and less of hope. Little time, little opportunity, remain for amendment. But there is hope for us still. God's love, God's mercy, is inexhaustible. Humbly, trustfully, lovingly, we must cast all our sins before the throne and commit ourselves to God's mercy in the Name of Him who heard and accepted the thief upon the cross.

ARCHDEACON PALMER, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Dec. 4th, 1879.

REFERENCES: xvi. 2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 192; E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 64; F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 276; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 91; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 77; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 353. xvi. 3.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 111. xvi. 5.—J. M. Neale, *Occasional Sermons*, p. 132. xvi. 5-7.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, part i., 231.

Chap. xvi., ver. 8.—**"The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light."**

I. IT is a remarkable story told by the poet Cowper of himself, that, when he was a young man, and living in London, where his companions were not only persons of profligate life, but of low and ungodly principles, they always had a great advantage over him when arguing upon the truth of Christianity by reproaching him with the badness of his own life. In fact, it appears that his life at that time was quite as bad as theirs, and they used to upbraid him for it; telling him that it would be well for him if they were right and he wrong in their opinions respecting the truth of the Gospel; for if it were true, he certainly would be condemned upon his own showing. These men, like the unjust steward in the parable, had at least the merit of acting wisely upon their own view of the matter; they made the mammon of unrighteousness—that is, the riches and enjoyments of the world—serve their turn for all that they believed them capable of yielding. And therefore Christ makes their conduct a

reproof to Christians, who do not make the world yield to them that fruit which, according to their professed belief, it might afford them.

II. The lesson which the parable of the unjust steward is designed to teach us is, that nothing is more unworthy, nothing more ruinous, than to be a Christian by halves; to begin to build, and not be able to finish. Salt is good, but the salt that has lost its savour is good neither for the land nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out; and even so vile and worthless is that Christian, in name only, who does not live according to his own principles but in defiance of them—who, with a journey to an eternal state opened before him, plays away his time on the road, and makes no provision for the end of his pilgrimage.

III. This one parable of our Lord's is to many a stumbling-block and to few so useful as it ought to be. To make to ourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, an English reader naturally understands to mean to make the mammon of unrighteousness, or unrighteous riches, our friends; whereas the real meaning of the words is: "Make to yourselves friends with, or by, the mammon of unrighteousness; that is, so use the riches and other advantages of this world that they may gain you friends hereafter—friends that will stand by you, when the riches themselves have perished. I need hardly add what these friends are—the record of good done upon earth, of misery relieved, of folly enlightened, of virtue encouraged and supported—the record of *their* thankful voices, who, having received from us good things in this world, shall welcome us with thanks and blessings, when we all stand together before Christ's judgment-seat.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 205.

Chap. xvi., vers. 8, 9.

THE Unjust Steward.

I. It is impossible to read this parable, and our Lord's remark upon it, without being struck by the broad assertion that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. The children of light are those who have been called to a knowledge of the Gospel, and who have given ear to that call, at least in some measure. The child of this world, on the other hand is one who, like Gallio, the Roman governor, cares for none of these things. Now of these two men, our Lord says, the child of this world is wiser in his generation, mind; that is, wiser in his own time. He who

chose his path like a fool, walks along it like a wise man, he who chose his like a wise man, walks along it like a fool. The true child of this world is thorough-going, active, persevering. When he has made up his mind that this or that thing is desirable, he sets his heart upon having it. Mammon is the god he has chosen for himself, and he serves his god, as a god ought to be served, with all his heart, with all his mind, and with all his strength. He is wise, therefore, in his way.

II. Turn now to the children of light, and tell me whether you can see the like marks of wisdom in them. We profess to make heaven the object of our lives; are we really and earnestly following after it? Too certain it is, that we serve our God, the great Maker and Ruler of the world, with less zeal, with less affection, with less heartiness, with less truth, than the man of business his mammon, or the man of pleasure his Belial. This is the fault and frailty of our Christian life. We do our work by halves. Seeing that we do believe in Christ, seeing that we do hope and wish for heaven, let us take a lesson from the enemy, and learn the wisdom of the serpent. Let us imitate the zeal, the perseverance, the prudence, the courage, the unweariableness—in a word, the wisdom—which the children of this world show in the pursuit of their vain and perishable, of their ruinous and deadly objects. Let us be as active and as determined to please God as they are to please themselves. Then on the great day, the God who for His Son's sake will vouchsafe to accept our services and to look with favour on imperfect attempts to employ the mammon of unrighteousness in His service, will receive us into everlasting habitations.

A. W. HARE, *The Alton Sermons*, p. 228.

REFERENCE: xvi. 8.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 174; C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day*, p. 385; *Homilist*, new series, vol. i., p. 503; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xi., p. 141; J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 201; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 105; H. P. Liddon, *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 97; I. Taylor, *Saturday Evening*, p. 161. xvi. 8-12.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 277.

Chap. xvi., ver. 9.

THE Earthly Life and Heavenly Training.

I. Every circumstance of man's life may become a training for immortality. The tenth and eleventh verses of this chapter imply two great principles on which this possibility is founded: (1) The eternity of God's law; (2) the perpetuity of man's character.

II. Observe the practical application of the words of our text. (1) They are a call to action. (2) They contain a lesson of encouragement.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 144.

REFERENCES: xvi. 9.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 193; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 138; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ix., p. 305; J. P. Waldo, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 84; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 257; G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons* p. 296. xvi. 9-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 280.

Chap. xvi., ver. 10.—**"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."**

LIVING to God in small Things.

I. Notice how little we know concerning the relative importance of events and duties. We use the terms great and small in speaking of actions, occasions, or places, only in reference to the mere outward look and first impression. We are generally ignorant of the real significance of events, which we think we understand. Almost every person can recollect one or more instances where the whole after-current of his life was turned by some single word, or some incident so trivial as scarcely to fix his notice at the time. The outward appearance of occasions and duties is, in fact, almost no index of their importance, and our judgments concerning what is great and small are without any certain validity. These terms, as we use them, are, in fact, only words of outward description, not words of definite measurement.

II. It is to be observed that, even as the world judges, small things constitute almost the whole of life. The great days of the year, for example, are few, and when they come they seldom bring anything great to us. And the matter of all common days is made up of little things, or ordinary or stale transactions.

III. It very much exalts, as well as sanctions, the view I am advancing, that God is so observant of small things. He upholds the sparrow's wing, clothes the lily with His own beautifying hand, and numbers the hairs of His children. The works of Christ are, if possible, a still brighter illustration of the same truth. Notwithstanding the vast stretch and compass of the work of redemption, it is a work of the most humble detail in its style of execution. When perfectly scanned, the

work of Christ's redemption, like the created universe, is seen to be a vast orb of glory, wrought up out of finished particles.

IV. It is a fact of history and of observation, that all efficient men, while they have been men of comprehension, have also been men of detail.

V. It is to be observed that there is more of real piety in adorning one small than one great occasion. The piety which is faithful in that which is least is really a more difficult piety than that which triumphs and glares on high occasions.

VI. The importance of living to God in ordinary and small things is seen in the fact that character, which is the end of religion, is in its very nature a growth. And, accordingly, there never has been a great or beautiful character which has not become so by filling well the ordinary and smaller offices appointed of God. Private Christians are instructed by this subject in the true method of Christian progress and usefulness. If it is your habit to walk with God in the humblest occupations of your days, it is very nearly certain that you will be filled with the Spirit always. Why is it that a certain class of men, who never thrust themselves on public observation by any very signal acts, do yet attain to a very commanding influence, and leave a deep and lasting impression on the world? They are the men who thrive by constancy and by means of small advances, just as others do who thrive in wealth. They live to God in the common doings of their daily life as well as in the more extraordinary transactions in which they mingle. And their carefulness to honour God in humble things is stronger proof to men of their uprightness than the most distinguished acts or sacrifices. Such persons operate principally by the weight of confidence and moral respect they acquire, which is the most legitimate and powerful action in the world. If a Christian of this stamp has not the talents or standing necessary to lead in the most active forms of enterprise, he will yet accomplish a high and noble purpose in his life. The silent savour of his name may, perhaps, do more good after he is laid in his grave, than abler men do by the most active efforts.

H. BUSHNELL, *The New Life*, p. 191.

Chap. xvi., vers. 10-12.

THIS Life our Trial for Eternity.

I. It is a great and awful thought which is put before us in these words by the Saviour and Guide of our souls; the great

importance, namely, of every part of our behaviour here in this present world, seeing that, from beginning to end, we are here upon our trial. The Lord and Head and Father of the family tries and proves us His children and servants whilst we are here by the little things of this world, whether we are fit to be entrusted with the great things of the world to come. The life in which we now are is our place of education, our school, our apprenticeship, which, if we get through well, we shall be ready for that which God hath prepared for us in the eternal life by-and-by. The little, short, passing affairs in which the Lord employs us now, are to us in one way great, and enduring, and eternal—for, by them, and by our behaviour in them, He would have us to become ready for the good, the true, the eternal things.

II. The true riches, given through God's mercy in Christ as a reward for our faithfulness in these mean, earthly things, are the very joy and glory of heaven itself, *that* joy and that glory of which it is written, that when He was rich in it, for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. Nothing here can be truly called our own ; it is only lent for a short time, just to see how we will employ it ; how can it be our own, indeed, seeing we must so soon part from it ? We may call it *ours* as little children call things their own which are put into their hands as playthings for a time ; but really and truly that only is ours which we shall meet with in the other, the eternal, part of our being ; that which we have committed in faith and love to the keeping of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* is ours, and will be so for ever. Our time, our money, all that we will call ours, is in reality His time and money, to whom we ourselves belong. To Him we must account for all. None of them have passed away for ever ; they will one day surely find us out.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons for Sunday's after Trinity*, part i., p. 283.

I. FROM the highest point of view true faithfulness knows no distinction between great and small duties. From the highest point of view, that is, from God's point of view, to Him nothing is great, nothing small, as we measure it. The worth and the quality of an action depend on its motive only, and not at all on its prominence, or on any other of the accidents which we are always apt to adopt as the tests of the greatness of our deeds. Nothing is small that a spirit can do. Nothing is small that can be done from a mighty motive. "Large" or "small" are not

words for the vocabulary of conscience. It knows only two words, right and wrong. This thought binds together in a very terrible unity all acts of transgression, and in a very blessed oneness all acts of obedience.

II. Faithfulness in small duties is even greater than faithfulness in great. We may legitimately adopt the distinction of great and small, a distinction which is founded upon truth, in regard to the different kinds of duties which devolve upon us in our daily life, if only we remember that all such distinctions are superficial; that the great and the small, after all, run down into one. Remembering that we may, then, fairly measure our different actions by two standards: one is the apparent importance of the consequences and the apparent splendour of the act, the other is the difficulties with which we have to contend in doing it;—I think it is quite true that it is a great deal harder, in ordinary cases, for us to go on doing the little things well, than for us to do the great things well. The smallest duties are often harder, because of their apparent insignificance, because of their constant recurrence, than the great ones. Be faithful in that which is least, and the accumulation of minute faithfulnesses will make the mighty faithfulness of a life.

III. Faithfulness in that which is least is the preparation for, and secures our having, a wider sphere in which to obey God. Every act of obedience smooths the road for all that shall come after. To get the habit of being faithful wrought into our life, and becoming part of our second and truer self, that is a defence all but impregnable for us when the stress of the great trials comes, or when God calls us to lofty and hard duties.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 1st series, p. 274.

How the Little may be used to get the Great.

I. Consider that strange new standard of value which is set up here. On the one side is placed the whole glittering heap of all material good that man can touch or handle, all that wealth can buy of this perishable world; and on the other hand there are the modest and unseen riches of pure thoughts and high desires, of a noble heart, of a life assimilated to Jesus Christ. The two are compared in three points: (1) As to their intrinsic magnitude; (2) as to their quality; (3) as to our ownership of them.

II. Notice the other broad principle that is laid down in these three verses, as to the highest use of the lower good. Whether you are a Christian man or not, this is true about you, that the

way in which you deal with your outward goods, your wealth, your capacity of all sorts, may become a barrier to your possessing the higher, or it may become a mighty help. The world thinks that the highest use of the highest things is to gain possession of the lowest thereby, and that truth and genius and poetry are given to select spirits, and are wasted unless they make money out of them. Christ's notion of the relationship is exactly the opposite: that all the outward is then lifted to its noblest purpose when it is made rigidly subordinate to the highest; and that the best thing that any man can do with his money is so to spend it as to purchase for himself a good degree, laying up for himself in store a good foundation that he may lay hold on eternal life.

III. One word as to the faithfulness which thus utilises the lowest as a means of possessing more fully the highest. You will be faithful if through all your administration of your possessions there runs (1) the principle of Stewardship; you will be faithful if through all your administration of your earthly possessions there runs (2) the principle of Sacrifice; you will be faithful if through all your administrations of your earthly possessions there runs (3) the principle of Brotherhood.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 1st series, p. 341.

REFERENCES: xvi. 10.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 106; W. M. Punshon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 104; *Ibid*, vol. xiii., p. 372; *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 115; *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 140; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 239; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 283; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 68. xvi. 11.—*Ibid.*, 4th series, p. 18. xvi. 11, 12.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 274. xvi. 12.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. x., p. 346.

Chap. xvi., ver. 14.—"And the Pharisees also, who were covetous, heard all these things, and they derided Him."

CONSIDER the conduct of the Pharisees, whose weak point had been touched by our Lord's teaching; they adopted the fool's course of mocking at that which they could not deny to be true, but whose truth they did not like to follow into its consequences, namely, into the practical result of a godly, self-denying life. Concerning this mode of dealing with rebuke, I have two remarks to make.

I. In the first place, I remark that however foolish a mode it may seem, and however much people may feel ashamed of it, when they see what it really is, yet it is very common and, in the usual sense of the word, very natural. It is natural to turn

into ridicule any exhortation or rebuke which has been felt to touch ourselves, and because it is natural, therefore it is also common. In the Book of Proverbs a fearful light is thrown upon the subject of mockery when wisdom is represented as eventually adopting the same course herself, mocking those who had once mocked her, laughing at their trouble, showing in such an awful manner the folly of such conduct by a terrific kind of retaliation.

II. The second remark which I have to make is that this method of derision is not only foolish and empty, but is also positively mischievous. The Pharisees in the text, for example, were morally injured by their conduct towards the Lord; they were less fit than they were before to receive impressions for good; their covetousness was fixed more firmly, and all their other evil habits also. For this is the special characteristic of deriding what is good, that the whole moral sense suffers, the edge of the conscience is blunted; the man is less open to conviction than before, not only with regard to the particular subject which called forth his derision, but with regard to every subject. Indeed the surest method which Satan can adopt, to ruin in the end a Christian's character, is to tempt him in the beginning to deride the persons from whom he hears solemn instruction and warning, or the books in which he reads the same.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 5th series, p. 233.

REFERENCES: xvi. 14.—J. P. Gledstone, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 181. xvi. 15.—C. G. Finney, *Sermons on Gospel Themes*, p. 347.

Chap. xvi., ver. 17.—"It is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail."

I. My text is true of the Bible as a Book divinely inspired. Since John wrote in his cell at Patmos, and Paul preached in his own hired house at Rome, the world has been turned upside down—all old things have passed away, all things on earth have changed but one. Rivalling in its fixedness and more than rivalling in its brightness the stars that saw our world born and shall see it die, that rejoiced in its birth and shall be mourners at its funeral, the Word of our God stands for ever. Time that weakens all things else has but strengthened its position. And as, year by year, the tree adds another ring to its circumference, every age has added its testimony to this truth, "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of the Lord shall endure for ever.

II. In practical application of my text I remark: (1) It can be said of the threatenings of the word, that it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail. If there are more blessed, there are more awful, words in the Bible than in any other book. It may be compared to the skies which hold at once the most blessed and the most baneful elements—soft dews to bathe the opening rose, and bolts that rend the oak asunder. In its threatenings, as much as in its promises, heaven and earth shall sooner pass, than one tittle of the law shall fail. (2) In regard to its promises. The traveller in the desert has heard that, far across the burning sands, a river rolls. He has seen or heard, or read of those who have sat on its willowy banks, and quenched their thirst and drunk in life there, and bathed their fevered frames in its cool crystal pools. So, though with bleeding feet, and sinking limbs, and parched throat and dizzy brain, led on by hope, and already in imagination quenching his thirst, he stoutly fights a battle for life and reaches the brink at length. Alas, what a sight meets his fixed and stony gaze! He stands petrified; no wave glittering in the sunbeams ripples on the shore, and invites the poor wretch to drink. The channel is full, but full of dry white stone. It saved others; him it cannot save. Victim of the bitterest disappointment, he lies down to expire, losing life where others found it. To such an accident, to hopes so fair but false, none are exposed who, rising to the call, "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink," seek life in Jesus—salvation in the grace of God. There is not one promise in the Gospel which is not as good and true as on the day it was made.

T. GUTHRIE, *Family Treasury*, Nov. 1861

REFERENCE: xvi. 17.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 200.

Chap. xvi., vers. 19, 20.—**"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day," etc.**

I. IT is very important to observe that, in this parable, we have not before us the entire character either of the rich man or Lazarus. The luxurious self-indulgent habit of living is the assumed scriptural characteristic of an unrenewed, worldly mind; and when it is associated with indifference to the suffering that everywhere abounds around us, it is itself a proof that, in such a manner as the love of God is wanting, the spirit of Christ does not dwell. The rich man was not cast into

prison because he was rich, but because he had abused his riches to pride and selfishness and worldly-mindedness, and forgetfulness of God. Still more important it is to observe that we have not the whole character of Lazarus. He was poor, he was afflicted, he was neglected and cast off by men; but so have many been who yet when they died found no entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Worldliness of spirit may be as confirmed, and disaffection towards God and holiness as inveterate and deep, under an outside of poverty and sores, as under a covering of fine linen and purple. It was not because he was poor that Lazarus was carried into Abraham's bosom. The real state of the heart towards God was the test applied, so that if Lazarus had not been patient as well as poor, resigned as well as afflicted, he would have been as rejected a suitor for a drop of water in the next world as he had been for a few falling crumbs of bread in this; for in Christ Jesus neither riches avail anything, nor want of riches, but a new creature.

II. The leading design of the parable is to show the inveterate stubbornness of unbelief, and the utter inadequacy of all conceivable means for its removal, where the ordinary appliances of revelation fail. "If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Unbelief is a disease of the heart. Evidence cannot reach it; miracle cannot reach it, it can be reached only, can be cured only, by the enlightening and transforming power of the Spirit of God. D. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,371.

REFERENCES: xvi. 19.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 200; C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 131. xvi. 19, 20.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 9. xvi. 19-31.—R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 453; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 347; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 376; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 117; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., pp. 102, 190; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 91; *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 265; W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 372. xvi. 22.—*Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 200; L. Campbell, *Some Aspects of the Christian Ideal*, p. 175. xvi. 22, 23.—G. Calthrop, *Words spoken to My Friends*, p. 223. xvi. 22-31.—S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 163.

Chap. xvi., vers. 23, 24.—"And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom," etc.

PRAYER to Saints, and Purgatory. These are two points of doctrine, upon which I think that we may regard this parable

as throwing light, without straining its words to purposes for which they were not intended.

I. The first doctrine to which I allude is that of prayer to saints. (1) I observe that the description of the resting-place of the blessed, as "Abraham's bosom," is the adoption of a merely Jewish figure for the condition of the departed. To be taken to that place in which Abraham, the head and father of their race, was, and to remain in his society, was to the mind of a pious Jew the fulfilment of all his soul's hopes; and the Lord, not desiring to raise the veil which hides the mysteries of the unseen world, adopted a description of the regions of the departed which at once explained itself to those whom He addressed, inasmuch as they were Jews. (2) Even if we do look upon the prayer of the rich man to Abraham as an example of a prayer to a saint, still that prayer was not answered. Abraham, without saying whether he had or had not the power to grant the request, shows why it would be wrong that it should be granted. The five brethren were in the hands of the Judge of all the earth, who would assuredly do right; and therefore it would be useless for him to interfere in a matter which was in God's own hands. This seems to point out the immorality of *all* prayers made to saints. For why are not the prayers made to God Himself? The conduct of Abraham seems to show that prayers to saints must either be unanswered and therefore vain, or else answered at the expense of interfering with the all-wise government of a just and jealous God.

II. The doctrine of purgatory. The rich man seems to me to be himself the best evidence we can have of the entire impossibility of changing the condition of those whose time of trial has terminated, and whose time of retribution has come; for those reasons which prevented the prayer offered to Abraham from being answered, though it is true that that prayer was one offered by a sinner in his torment, are quite as cogent when they are applied to prayers offered upon earth by the friends who have been left behind. The parable shows us, not only the futility of the prayers of the dead for their surviving friends, but also the emptiness of the prayers of surviving friends for the dead. There is a great gulf fixed; the saint cannot pass it to help the sinner, neither can the sinner pass it to claim the company of the saint.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 5th series, p. 276.

Chap. xvi., ver. 25.—"Abraham said, Son, remember!"

MEMORY in Another World.

"Son, remember." It is the voice, the first voice, the perpetual voice, which meets every man when he steps across the threshold of earth into the presence-chamber of eternity. All the future is so built upon and interwoven with the past, that for the saved and for the lost alike this word might almost be taken as the motto of their whole situation, as the explanation of their whole condition. Memory in another world is indispensable to the gladness of the glad, and strikes the deepest note in the sadness of the lost.

I. Memory will be so widened as to take in the whole life. We believe that what a man is in this life he is more in another, that tendencies here become results yonder, that his sin, that his falsehood, that his whole moral nature, be it good or bad, becomes there what it is only striving to be here. Whether saved or lost, he that dies is greater than when yet living; and all his powers are intensified and strengthened by that awful experience of death, and by what it brings with it. In this life, we have but the island memories heaving themselves into sight, but in the next the Lord shall cause the sea to go back by the breath of His mouth, and the channels of the great deep of a human heart's experience and actions shall be laid bare. "There shall be no more sea," but the solid land of a whole life will appear when God says "Son, remember."

II. Memory in a future state will probably be so rapid as to embrace all the past life at once. We do not know, we have no conception of, the extent to which our thinking and feeling and remembrance, are made tardy by the slow vehicle of this bodily organization in which the soul rides. From the mountain of eternity we shall look down and see the whole plain before us. The memory shall be perfect—perfect in the range of its grasp, and perfect in the rapidity with which it brings up all its objects before us at every instant.

III. There will be a *constant* remembrance in another world.

IV. Memory will be associated in a future life with a perfectly accurate knowledge of the consequences, and a perfectly sensitive conscience as to the criminality of the past.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, p. 111.

REFERENCES: xvi. 25.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 294; vol. xxviii., p. 123; R. Duckworth, *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 264; M. Dix, *Sermons Doctrinal and Practical*, p. 257.

Chap. xvi., ver. 26.—"And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

THE Great Gulf.

Consider the lasting distinction between the condition of the rich man and of Lazarus which the text brings befoer us. Abraham says that between the rich man and Lazarus a great gulf was fixed, so that none could pass from one side to the other. *A great gulf fixed;* observe, it is no slight interval, no trifling difference, but it is a chasm, a gulf and a wide one; and, moreover, it is *fixed*, the word in the original Greek is quite as strong as that which our English version has given, perhaps stronger; it means that this gulf or chasm has been firmly and durably established, that it is no slight or accidental difference which it may be hoped that time will blot out, but that it is a deep wide gap which no reasoning can hide, and no time can ever heal. It is most necessary that, as this is our Saviour's own description, we should take His words in all the fulness of their meaning, of course not straining them beyond their intention, but, also, not cutting off from them any of their strength.

I. What I conceive, then, that our Lord asserts in the text is this,—that there is a great impassable gulf fixed between the spiritual condition of those whom He represents by the rich man, and those whom He represents by Lazarus. The great gulf is not between the rich and the poor, not between those who have been favoured by God in this life and those who have been chastened by Him, but it is between those who have so used this world as to starve their spirits, those who have fixed their eyes so firmly on the things of time and sense that they could not see the realities of a future world, those who have become carnal and sensualised because they must needs give all their efforts to feed their bodies, and have been content to leave their souls uncared for.

II. And without pretending to go into the deep mystery of the other world, yet this, at least, is enough to show us the greatness of the gulf, and why it is so firmly fixed; the joys of heaven are spiritual, there is no pleasure there for a man who has no fear of God, no pleasure in obeying Him; and therefore he who by a long course of carelessness and self-indulgence and neglect of God has hardened his soul, has thereby put a gulf between heaven and him. The mere

possibility of doing so should make all of us ask ourselves earnestly and with trembling, how far we are improving our opportunities. Even this is the seed-time of a long existence, and he who does not sow good seed, or having sown it does not water it and weed it, may not complain if his crop fail in the end.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 216.

REFERENCES: xvi. 26.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 518; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 20; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 25.

Chap. xvi., vers. 27, 28.—"Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house," etc.

I. THE Scriptures distinctly reveal future punishment.

II. In a future state punishment will completely arouse memory. "Son, remember."

III. The punishment of hell will be regulated by the previous conduct and character of the punished. Hell is a grave in which God places what is not fit to be elsewhere, and from which is absent all but the process of corruption and the workings of destruction.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, p. 165.

REFERENCES: xvi. 27.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 143. xvi. 27, 28.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. ii., p. 189; R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters and Miscellanies*, p. 522; *Homilist*, vol. iv., p. 47.

Chap. xvi., ver. 30.

THE Future Results of Present Indifference.

I. Many read this parable, and are staggered at finding that so little is said against the rich man. What was it by which he so grievously offended? and which caused his being cast into that fire which shall never be quenched? We can only say, from what we read in the parable, that there was in this rich man a complete unmindfulness of others—that he was swallowed up in himself. The sick beggar lay at his gate, where he could not have been wholly unobserved; but he took no notice, and ordered no relief. This was a grievous inhumanity. I do not mean that the rich man was a cruel and hard-hearted man, but he was thoroughly selfish and devoted to his own pleasures and enjoyments; he did not give even a passing thought to the necessitous and the suffering among his fellow-men. Surely we ought to gather a more

startling lesson from this than had the rich man been charged with what the world regards as enormous crime.

II. Consider the rich man's entreaty that Lazarus might be sent to warn his five brothers, lest by living the same life they should incur the same doom. It seems inconsistent with the thorough selfishness of Dives that we should suppose him at all actuated in making this request by compassion towards his brethren. Probably, as a selfish being still, he dreaded the coming spirits as those of ministers of vengeance who would overwhelm him with reproaches and execrations, as having encouraged them by his example in the broad way of ruin. Dives shrank from the presence of his brethren. Come any companions rather than these.

III. Consider the reasons on which Abraham refused so earnest a petition. The parable put into the mouth of Abraham may be vindicated by the most cogent, yet simple, reasoning. The effect of a messenger threatening us with punishment unless we repent, depends chiefly on our assurance that it is actually a messenger from God. Now which is the stronger, the evidence which we have that the Bible is God's Word, or that which we could be supposed to have that the grave has given up its tenant, and that the spectre has spoken to us truth. The man who is not persuaded by Christ and the Apostles, might be expected to remain unpersuaded by the spectre. It would give a solemnity, an awful unearthliness, to the ministry of the word if it were conducted by a visitant from the separate state; but the pleasures and business of this life would produce gradually the same effect as now, obliterating the impression made by the solemn discourse. If they hear not Christ and His Apostles, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,496.

REFERENCE: xvi. 30, 31.—J. B. Mozley, *Sermons Parochial and Occasional*, p. 63.

Chap. xvi., ver. 31.—**"If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."**

LET us ask what was the cause which brought on the rich man so terrible a fate? It was not simply his wealth, and it was something from which an observance of the precepts of the Jewish religion would have saved him. What, then, is the character of the rich man as drawn in the parable? It is drawn

in two strokes—his ordinary life, and his treatment of Lazarus. (1) His daily life was luxurious. But most certainly we have no right to condemn him for that. With the Jewish nobility in practice, as with the Jewish law in theory, luxurious living does not seem to have been thought to involve any sin whatever. (2) Lazarus is, then, the type of the poor generally. The treatment which Lazarus received is to be regarded as a fair specimen of the rich man's behaviour to the poor generally. The portrait of the rich man, as drawn by Christ, is that of a man luxurious and selfish—habitually careful of the gratification of his own appetite, and habitually careless of the suffering which was around him, even at his doors. And from this selfish disregard of human misery, "Moses and the prophets," had he listened to them, would certainly have saved him. There was no point on which they spoke more plainly. Love to his kindred the rich man certainly had, and his anxiety, in the midst of his own suffering, to save from the same fate the brethren whom he had left behind is almost sublime. The charity which is so often said to begin at home—the love which, strong but narrow, expends itself wholly upon the small circle of relatives and friends—that he had. The love that looks more widely, not refusing pity and aid, because the applicant is a stranger—that he had not.

J. H. JELLETT, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 15.

I. WHAT the chief sins of the rich man were, although not expressly stated in the parable, may yet be understood from attending to two or three of its circumstances. First, his heart seems to have been too much set upon the good things of this life, instead of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Secondly, as Lazarus desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from his table, and as we do not read that he was fed, we may guess that the rich man took no notice of him, but let him lie and languish without relief. Here are two grievous sins, worldly-mindedness and hard-heartedness, justly punished with God's wrath and damnation. Let us look to ourselves, that we be not guilty of the same sins, and liable to the same punishment.

II. Let no man complain as if he had not enough made known to him by Almighty God concerning his duty. For if even in the time of Moses and the Prophets, and before one rose from the dead, they were inexcusable, whoever they were that sinned, much more we, if we do despite unto the Spirit of

grace, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing—as we plainly do if we sin wilfully after we have come to a knowledge of the truth. For unto us that hath happened which alone this man thought needful to make any sinner repent, to us One hath come from the dead, even Jesus Christ our Lord, who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Let us therefore hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering, knowing that if we break or reject this covenant, there remaineth no other.

III. Finally, if ye know these things, ye are but the more unhappy except ye do them. It is not your calling yourselves Christians, nor even your believing the Gospel when you happen to think of it, that will make you worthy to be carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom, if your heart be not with God—if your thoughts, words, and actions be not governed by His Commandments.

J. KEBLE, *Sermons Occasional and Parochial*, p. 29.

THE radical defect in this rich man, that which was the root of all his sin and the cause of all his woe, was, that he did not use his advantages, he despised Moses and the Prophets, he had a talent given him and he buried it in a napkin. And this being the case, we shall not be so much surprised at the words of the text, if we think well upon them; for the Books of Moses and the Prophets told the rich man of his duty quite as clearly as Lazarus could have done if he had returned from the dead. They told him that he was to love God above all things and his neighbour as himself; and they told him also that God was a jealous God, and One who would in no wise spare the guilty. And if he shut his ears to this, what reason have we to think that a man returned from the dead would have greater powers of persuasion? For it is not as though there were something of which a man had to be convinced, and of which a resurrection from the dead would be a proof: there is a voice within every man, which tells him what is right and condemns what is wrong, and when this is stifled by selfishness and sin, no voice from the grave can supply its place.

II. Some advantages we all have in common: we have all the public prayers of the Church; we have all the Holy Spirit striving within us, and convincing us of sin and of righteousness; we have all our Bibles, which we can read; we may all partake, if we will, of the Holy Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood. These, and such as these, are our "Moses and the Prophet's;'

they are the voice of God speaking to us, and telling us of the beauty of holiness, the ugliness of sin, of the glories of heaven and the horrors of hell. Do we want any other voice? Nay, if we shut our ears to these, a voice from the grave would be in vain. The same message of repentance and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ has come to us all, and it is for us to attend to it; and if we shut our ears and harden our hearts to such messages as this, we have put ourselves into an attitude of resistance to God, and have so injured our own perceptions of right and wrong, have so blinded our eyes to that Light which lighteth every man who comes into the world, that no miracle, not even a resurrection from the dead, will have any power to convince.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 209.

I. CONSIDER how we are to understand this declaration of Abraham. There is at first sight something very startling in the principle here enunciated, more especially if we remember from whom it came. Are these, it may be asked, indeed the words of the Founder of Christianity? Is it thus He speaks of the value of miracles, who Himself repeatedly appealed to His own marvellous works as a convincing evidence of His Divine mission? To understand what the thought really is, we must inquire what additional proof of the truth of His religion or incentive to its practice, would have been given to one who had in his hands the writings of "Moses and the Prophets," by the re-appearance of man after death. We must note here that scepticism with regard to the marvellous events of their own history does not seem to have been prevalent among the Jews of that time, and was certainly not the fault of that class, the Pharisees, to whom this parable was more immediately addressed. The Divine mission of Moses—a mission attested and enforced by miracles—was quite generally accepted as a truth. So far, then, the thought seems to be, "On you, who have already in your hands the recorded miracles of the Mosaic Dispensation, no *seen* miracle could produce, in enforcing the same truths, any appreciable results."

If this were all, the passage which I have taken for my text would not present any great difficulty. But there is something still behind. Does the Author of this parable mean to say that the doctrine of a future life would be destitute of moral effect on those who were deaf to the teaching of Moses? I answer that whatever of obedience to positive law could be obtained by a

system of temporal rewards and punishments—by the promise or bestowal of earthly prosperity—by the threat or infliction of earthly suffering—all that had been done by the Mosaic Dispensation. And I cannot read the words of Christ to mean less than this: that if you alter the Mosaic system merely by super-adding to the hopes and terrors of this life the hopes and terrors of the life to come, you will effect nothing. If that system has failed, yours will not succeed. If such promises and threats fail to obtain the result, you will not obtain it merely by changing the scene of their fulfilment from this world to the next. J. H. JELLETT, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 30.

REFERENCES: xvi. 31.—H. P. Liddon, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 1; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 143; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 225; G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 47; R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 141; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 186; T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 169; R. Scott, *University Sermons*, p. 210. xvi.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 246.

Chap. xvii., ver. 1.—"It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!"

I. WE understand from such a sentence as this, what a true, calm judgment of life the New Testament furnishes. It tells us the worst; it does not gloss things over. Its writers and teachers are not carried away by enthusiasm. They do not paint the world, even as it is to be in the light of Christian truth as a Utopia, a happy dreamland of perfection. We remember who it was that pronounced this sentence. Not one who despaired of humanity, not a cynic to whom its weaknesses were matter for sarcasm, but one who, for all its vice and weakness, "so loved the world," and so hoped all things and believed all things of the world, that He came from heaven to live in it and to die for it. And yet, in spite of this, He could say calmly, "It is *impossible*"—so God had allowed it to be—and proceed to warn and to persuade and to work for men and with men, as though the necessary existence of temptation did not lessen human responsibility, or make impossible the preservation of innocence or the growth of holiness.

II. Notice two or three applications of our Lord's words. (1) A life of selfish enjoyment can hardly escape being a life through which offence comes. It is hard to live before others a life which is easier than theirs—more guarded and furnished with appliances of comfort and pleasure—without causing some

harm to them, it may be by rousing envy, it may more easily be by setting before them a wrong ideal, strengthening in them the dangerous sense that a man's life consists in the abundance of the things that he possesses. (2) Our Lord's words give the key to one side of human sin and wretchedness. "It is impossible but that offences will come"—impossible but that one man's wickedness or folly should lead to sin and wretchedness in others; impossible even in a world Christian in name and profession; impossible even when men are trying in a sense and degree to live as Christians. It is a question that we must be always asking ourselves, whether we are so living as to help or to injure these near us—those who look up to us, those who breathe the same air with us, those who will in any way form a standard from our acts and character.

E. C. WICKHAM, *Wellington College Sermons*, p. 232.

REFERENCE: xvii. 3-5.—*Good Words*, vol. iii., p. 700.

Chap. xvii., ver. 5.—"And the disciples said unto Him, Lord, increase our faith."

THERE is a twofold difficulty in this passage: (1) The manner in which Christ receives the prayer of the Apostles seems to be not such as we should have expected; and, (2) the connection of thought between the prayer for increase of faith and the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant is far from obvious. I ask then—

I. What was there wrong,—or, if not wrong, at least unsatisfactory or ignorant—in the prayer which the Apostles made to Christ in the text? I believe the explanation is this, that the Apostles betrayed in their prayer an ignorance of the true meaning and province of faith; the Lord had just been impressing upon them a plain practical duty, that of forgiving each other their offences, and the Apostles feeling how hard it would be for human nature to fulfil this command, admitting that justice of the Lord's injunction, and fearing lest they should be tempted to forget it, make the prayer that He would increase their faith—as though faith were a kind of preservative from sin of which the more we had the better, as though a certain amount of faith would prevent a man from falling, just as a certain amount of medicine might cure a complaint; and as though if they had only faith enough given to them by God's grace they could be perfect in their walk through this world, and sure of life in the world to come. What is the Lord's reply? He tells them that if they have faith at all, they have

in them that principle which can work miracles, faith no doubt admits of growth, but how? just by the performance of those practical duties which the Lord had enjoined; it is not for a man to say, "I cannot do such and such things, because I have not faith enough;" but rather to strive to increase His faith by doing God's will.

II. Faith, then, is represented by Christ as that which, if only possessed in the magnitude of a mustard seed, may be capable of great spiritual results; it is not the size of the seed which determines its importance, a portion of a large seed is not the same as the whole of a small one; no, the seed contains a principle of *life*; and so faith in the heart, if it be but genuine, may grow and bear most wonderful fruits. The prayer of the Apostles in the text is at least one which requires caution in the use; and it becomes positively mischievous if it implies the thought that any gift of faith from God, any supernatural influence, any inspiration from above, can be a substitute for the patient development of the seed of God's grace, the watering of it with prayer, the keeping it clear from noxious intertwining weeds, the pruning and dressing of the tree—in fact, the thorough devotion of our spiritual energies to carrying on the work of grace.

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 168.

NOT *quite sure*—

There are no sadder words; none at all. Every other trouble could be borne, if we were but delivered from doubt; if we were but perfectly sure of certain things which good people often say. The prayer of the text for many men and many women is a very old one. Day and night it ought to go up, to where prayer goes; the prayer the Apostle made to Jesus Christ: "Increase our faith."

I. I put quite aside the special use which they, perhaps, wished to make of a strong faith. Perhaps they thought to work mighty works, which we have not the least desire to do. It is *faith to believe* which we desire and ask for: faith to be perfectly sure. Give us more faith; firmer faith, constant faith; faith that does not ebb and flow: faith that is always there. It is a great thing to ask. There is a thread of the sceptic, even of the infidel, in many a good Christian. There come the agnostic moments into many a saintly life. So we come, we who are professed Christians, to God Almighty, with the prayer made in solemn earnestness: "Give us more faith."

II. It will not do in these days, to pretend that there are no difficulties in the way of a firm belief. But in the face of all difficulties, we take our stand here: that there is evidence adequate to the healthy mind, which proves the grand doctrines by which we live; that there is a God; a future life; that Christ was here; and if here at all, our Sacrifice and Saviour. I need not try to reckon up, or rehearse, the many truths which come of these, which multiply and are ramified into every detail of our daily life, always more and more as we grow older. These are the things we pray to believe. These are the things we have imperfectly in our minds, when we go to God and cry to Him with an earnestness beyond all words: "Oh give us more faith."

III. By what means shall we get increase of faith? (1) By asking it from God in earnest and continual prayer. (2) By keeping out of harm's way. There is a moral atmosphere laden with unbelief. Keep out of the society of unbelievers. Irreverence and flippancy and self-conceit are the characteristics of any whom you are likely to know. Such company cannot possibly do you good. It is almost certain to do you harm. (3) Stand in fear of any permitted sin. Not morally only, but intellectually too, you do not know how it may harm you, incapacitate you, pervert you. Pray with the Psalmist, "Cleanse Thou me from secret faults; keep back Thy servant also from presumptuous sins."

A. K. H. B., *Towards the Sunset*, p. 1.

REFERENCES: xvii. 5.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,318; J. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 17; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 420. xvii. 6.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 253; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 307; *Ibid.*, 2nd series, vol. iii., p. 207. xvii. 7-10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 350; G. Macdonald, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 149; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic teaching of Christ*, p. 168.

Chap. xvii., ver 8.

WE want some method of investigating spiritual ideas which will give us enough of results to satisfy the intellect, not fully, but sufficiently to permit the spirit to go on in its course without the sacrifice of the intellect. For we are bound to educate and bring into play all the capabilities of our nature; and to sacrifice any one of them is to injure the whole of our being.

I. There is a spiritual world as extended as humanity, and to assert its existence is no more to beg the question than the assertion of a physical world. I mean by it the world of the human heart in its relations to the idea of God, and to all

the feelings and actions which cluster round that idea. Then there are the innumerable facts which have been recorded of the varied and passionate feelings of individuals in their relation to their idea of God, and of the lives which flowed from these feelings: every appetite mental or physical, every passion of humanity being profoundly modified and changed by being brought into contact with certain large religious thoughts. It is ridiculous to deny the existence of these phenomena, or to explain them as diseases of the mind. What should be the method of the sceptic who is desirous of finding truth? He should take all the facts he can find, he should classify them as far as possible, he should not blind himself to any, and he should bring them up to the theories and say to them, "Do you explain that?" He should test religious theories by religious facts. I cannot imagine, keeping myself strictly within logical limits, how the atheistic theory in any form can stand that test It does not explain a millionth part of the phenomena; and in place of any proof, it substitutes another theory, which it gives no proof, that the facts are not what they seem, or that they know nothing about their explanation, which is giving up the whole affair—a very unscientific mode of proceeding.

II. But there are certain grand Christian ideas, which go naturally with each other, which, as it were, infer each other, and which, taken together, form a theory of the relation between God and man, which I do think explains the greater part of the spiritual phenomena of the world of man. Take, then, the facts of the spiritual history of the world and of your own personal life. Bring them to these ideas—to this theory. See if it will explain them, see if it does not of itself arrange them into order, see if it does not harmonise them into a whole; and I venture to say that you will find things growing clearer and clearer, difficulties melting away—or, at least, such light coming upon them that you seem to know that they will melt away. We have faith enough now not to despair, and our cry is this, "Lord, increase our faith."

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 108.

Chap. xvii., ver. 10.—**"When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do."**

RELIANCE on Religious Observances. Consider how this danger of over-reliance on religious observances is counteracted in the case of serious minds.

I. The evil in question—supposing it to exist—is singularly adapted to be its own corrective. It can only do us injury when we do not know its existence. When a man feels and knows the intrusion of self-satisfied and self-complacent thoughts, here is something at once to humble him and destroy that complacency. To know of a weakness is always humbling. Now humility is the very grace needed here. Knowledge of our indolence does not encourage us to exertion, but induces despondence; but to know we are self-satisfied is a direct blow to self-satisfaction. Here is one great safeguard against our priding ourselves on our observances. Evil thoughts do us no harm, if recognised, if repelled, if protested against by the indignation and self-reproach of the mind.

II. But, again, if religious persons are troubled with proud thoughts about their own excellence and strictness, I think it is only when they are young in their religion, and that the trial will wear off; and that for many reasons. It does not require much keenness of spiritual sight to see how very far our best is from what it ought to be. Try to do your *whole* duty, and you will soon cease to be well-pleased with your religious state. If you are in earnest, you will try to add to your faith virtue, and the more you effect the less will you seem to yourself to do. The more you neglect your daily domestic, relative, temporal, duties the more you will pride yourself on your formal, ceremonial observances.

III. The objection that devotional exercises tend to self-righteousness, is the objection of those—or, at least, is just what the objection of those would be—who never attempted them. A religious mind has a perpetual humiliation from *this* consciousness—namely, how far his actual conduct in the world falls short of the profession which his devotional exercises involve.

IV. But, after all, what is this shrinking from responsibility, which fears to be obedient lest it should be, but cowardice and ingratitude? To fear to do our duty, lest we should become self-righteous in doing it, is to be wiser than God; it is to distrust Him; it is to do and to feel like the unprofitable servant, who hid his lord's talent and then laid the charge of his sloth on his lord, as being a hard and austere man.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 66.

REFERENCES: xvii. 10.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,541; J. Thain Davidson, *Sure to Succeed*, p. 279; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, vol. i., p. 182; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 132; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 32. xvii. 11-14.—W. Wilson, *Christ*

setting His Face to go to Jerusalem, p. 126. xvii. 11-19.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 152; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 85. xvii. 12-14.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvii., No. 1,635. xvii. 14-16.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 161.

Chap. xvii., vers. 15-18.—**"And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God," etc.**

THE Ten Lepers. There are, speaking broadly, three chief reasons for unthankfulness on the part of man towards God—

I. An indistinct idea or an under-estimate of the service that He renders us.

II. A disposition, whether voluntary or not, to lose sight of our Benefactor.

III. The notion that it does not matter much to Him whether we acknowledge His benefits or not.

Gratitude is our bounden duty, because it is the acknowledgment of a hard fact—the fact that all things come of God; the fact that we are utterly dependent upon Him; the fact that all existence, all life, is but an overflow of His love; because to blink this fact is to fall back into the darkness and to forfeit that strength which comes always and everywhere with the energetic acknowledgment of truth. Morally speaking, the nine lepers were not the men they would have been if, at the cost of some trouble, they had accompanied the one who, "when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God . . . giving Him thanks."

H. P. LIDDON, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 455.

REFERENCES: xvii. 15-19.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1,935. xvii. 17.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 161. xvii. 17, 18.—C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 375; *Homilist*, vol. vii., p. 207.

Chap. xvii., ver. 19.—**"And He said unto him, Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole."**

I. OF the unthankfulness which so seriously depresses and blights our whole modern Christian life, one reason, in many cases, is that we do not see our great Benefactor. I do not forget that some of us may feel true gratitude to those human friends who have been kind to us in years past, and who are now out of sight. But take men in the mass, and it is quite otherwise. Little by little, as the years pass, too many of us forget the benefits that we owe to the dead. The pressure, the importunity of the present and of the seen makes us overlook the great debt of thought and love which we owe to the past and the unseen.

Then God's very generosity only provokes our unthankfulness. He keeps out of sight, and we take it for granted that He would show Himself if He could, that His agency is only invisible because it is shadowy or unreal.

II. A second cause of unthankfulness is our imperfect appreciation of God's gifts. The true source of this is that dulness, that harshness of spiritual perception which health and prosperity too often inflict upon the soul. We cannot see clearly through the thick film which has thus been formed over the spiritual eye. If we did see, we should own with full and thankful hearts that love is love, blessings are blessings, salvation is salvation, whether we share them with the many or the few.

III. And a third reason in many minds against cultivating and expressing thankfulness to God—men do not mention it, but it is the utilitarian one—men do not see the good of thankfulness. The value of prayer, of course, in Christian eyes is plain enough. Christians believe that certain blessings are to be obtained from God through the instrumentality of prayer, and not to obey is to forfeit the blessings which prayer obtains. "But thankfulness," men say to themselves, "what does it win for us that is not already ours without it? God blesses us out of the joy of doing so; and whether we thank Him or not must be of small concern to such a Being as He is." Certainly, God does not expect to be repaid for His benevolence by any equivalent in the way of thanksgiving that you or I can possibly offer Him. And yet He will have us thank Him, not for His own sake, but for ours. Just as prayer is the recognition of our dependence upon God amid the darkness and uncertainties of the future, so thankfulness is the recognition of our indebtedness to God for the blessings of the past. And to acknowledge truth like this is always moral strength; to refuse to acknowledge truth like this is always moral weakness.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 129.

REFERENCE: xvii. 19.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 93.

Chap. xvii., ver. 20.—**"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.'**

SECRECY and Suddenness of Divine Visitations.

I. It is impossible that the visitations of God should be other than secret and sudden, considering how the world goes on in every age. Men who are plunged in the pursuits of active life

are no judges of its course and tendency on the whole. They confuse great events with little, and measure the importance of objects, as in perspective, by the mere standard of nearness or remoteness. It is only at a distance that one can take in the outlines and features of a whole country. It is but holy Daniel, solitary among princes, or Elijah, the recluse of Mount Carmel, who can withstand Baal, or forecast the time of God's providences among the nations. To the multitude all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. The business of state affairs, the movements of society, the course of nature, proceed as ever, till the moment of Christ's coming. Pride infatuates man, and self-indulgence and luxury work their way unseen—like some smouldering fire, which for a time leaves the outward form of things unaltered. At length the decayed mass cannot hold together, and breaks by its own weight, or on some slight and accidental external violence. This inward corruption of a nation seems to be meant in our Lord's words when He says of Jerusalem, "Where soever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

II. From the occurrences of this day* let us take comfort when we despond about the state of the Church. Perhaps we see not God's tokens; we see neither prophet nor teacher remaining to His people; darkness falls over the earth, and no protesting voice is heard. Yet, granting things to be at their very worst, still, when Christ was presented in the Temple, the age knew as little of it as it knows of His providence now. Rather, the worse our condition is, the nearer to us is the advent of our Deliverer. Even though He is silent, doubt not that His army is on the march towards us. He is coming through the sky, and has even now His camp upon the outskirts of our world. The greater His delay, the heavier will be His vengeance, and the more complete the deliverance of His people.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 107.

I. "NOT with observation." "God manifest in the flesh" was a phenomenon the like of which had never yet been seen, and which throws every other event in the annals of man utterly into the shade. And what amount of public notice did it attract? The villagers of Bethlehem could find no room for the heavenly Visitant in their hostelry; they little heeded the manger-grotto outside where He, the, Infinite in human form, was laid alongside

* Preached on the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary.

of the ox and the ass. Truly then the kingdom of God had come, but "not with observation."

II. And when He who was the Centre and Sun of the Church, Jesus our Lord, had been crucified and had risen and founded His kingdom as His own Church, it still for many a year continued to illustrate this its early and Divine characteristic: it came among men "not with observation."

III. As with the Church so with the soul, the law holds good that the kingdom comes not with observation. The great change of conversion most assuredly "cometh not with observation." All the more solemn and precious incidents in the life of the spirit of man do not court observation, but they elude, they shrink from it.

H. P. Liddon, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1,126.

We must be careful to distinguish concerning what kingdom and what coming our Saviour is speaking.

I. The Pharisees—who in common not only with their own countrymen, but almost with the whole Eastern world, were looking at that moment, though not according to knowledge, for the expectation of Israel—demanded one day of Christ "when the kingdom of God should come." And to them He made the answer, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation." Now the answer must have run in the line of the question; and therefore it must have referred to the first and then expected advent of our Lord; and it was concerning the establishment of the kingdom of grace that He said, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

II. It is interesting and very important to trace—for it contains a deep, spiritual lesson—how unobservableness is the characteristic of all God's great approaches to man. The workings of God's grace are, for the most part, not only beyond but contrary to, our calculation. God is mounting up to His grand design; but we cannot see the steps of His ascent. We look back, but we marvel at the line of the processes; and as each came in its order it was so simple that it escaped our observation, or so minute that it baffled our perception.

III. It seems to be the general rule of all that is sublime that its motions shall be unseen. Who can discern the movements of the planets—whose evolutions we admire, whose courses guide our path? The day breaks, and the day sets, but who can fix the boundaries of the night, the boundaries of the darkness? You may watch the departing of summer beauty—

as the leaves are swept by the autumn wind—but can the eye trace its movements? Does not everything on the earth and in the earth proclaim that "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation"? We must remember that the principle of God's universal government is to produce the grandest issues by the unlikeliest of means. Only give your best and do your best, and thus, by these little ripples, the great tide of truth sets in upon this world. Great opportunities pass by noiselessly, the highest claims plead quietly, and the deepest responsibilities roll in their stillnesses—"for the kingdom of God cometh not with observation."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 257.

Chap. xvii., vers. 20, 21.

GOD'S Kingdom Invisible.

The true character of God's kingdom is ghostly and inward. It has its seat in the hearts of men, in their moral habits, in their thoughts, actings, and affections, in the form and the bias of their moral being; the visible forms we see are but the shadow of the reality. God's kingdom is the obedience of the unseen spirit of man to the unseen Lord of all. We see, then, *what* it is; and we see, therefore, how we may fall into a fault like that of the Jews, by transmuting the true idea of its spiritual character into the base alloy of earthly notions.

I. If we look for Christ's kingdom among the popular theories of religious and political speculators, we shall look for the living among the dead. We have great need to guard against this danger, for the popular opinion of this day, whether in politics or religion, leads to an earthly conception of the Church, as of a thing subject to the senses and understanding of man. A second danger to which men are now tending s, to think that God's kingdom is to be spread by visible excitement of people's minds. The whole scheme of modern religion is visible motion. All its machinery is on the surface; all its momentum is from without. There has been, from the beginning of the Gospel, an inwardness, an invisibleness, about all great movements of Christ's Church which ought to abash the hasty, talkative zeal of men into a reverent silence.

II. Knowing, then, the character of God's kingdom w shall know how to keep ourselves from these delusive schemes, and how to spread it on the earth. We shall know (1) that the way to spread it is to have it ruling in ourselves, to have our own spirit brought into harmony with its secret workings. It

is still by the strength of a holy character that we must leave the stamp of God upon the world. (2) And by knowing the character of that kingdom, we shall know, too, how to make that character our own; that is, chiefly by a life of inward holiness. (3) And to sustain this character within us, at all times, we must remember that God's kingdom is at all times present with us.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 172.

REFERENCES: xvii. 20.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 353; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Life*, vol. ii., p. 76. xvii. 20, 21.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi. p. 173; *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 121.

Chap xvii., ver. 21.—"Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

LET us consider the kingdoms which are not material, but of a finer substance than matter, and whose forces and powers are represented by other than materialistic ones. Of these kingdoms we mention three—

I. The kingdom of Mind. (1) Its creations are immortal; (2) its kings suffer no dethronement. At the motion of their hands our thoughts start up for service. Their kingdom is like a sea that has no shore; it is limitless. The race of man, irrespective of local boundaries, irrespective of governmental divisions, acknowledges the supremacy of their dominion.

II. The kingdom of the Heart. Where, in this kingdom, will you find any signs of age, any evidence of weariness, any vestige of decay, any proof that it has an end? Look where you will; sight it from whatever point of view you choose; measure it by whatever standard your ingenuity can invent, and you will find that this kingdom is a kingdom that knows not the measurement of time, that suffers not the infringements of age, that has never felt, and may never feel, the weakening of duration.

III. The kingdom of Soul. The kingdom of the mind naturally suggests man; the kingdom of the heart naturally suggests companionship and social communings; the kingdom of soul represents eternity. It represents God and the beings that are allied to God, and are of Him as the Son is of the Father. But the forces of the kingdom of soul are not to be seen in action like the former, and the reason is because this is not the sphere and the realm of their action. What refers to matter here has reference to earth and time; but soul refers to

spirit, and has reference to heaven and eternity; and it is only by a mighty swing upwards, of ourselves, that we can reach that level of contemplation. Ranging our sight along which we behold the multitudinous activities of the soul. It is over this inward kingdom that Christ rules. It is within this kingdom that He energises. It is out of this kingdom that His glory has to proceed. And they who search to discern Him in spirit and life, in holy expression of consecrated faculty, in the energy of capacities dedicated to God, shall find Him; and they shall find that in these He is all in all.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 334.

THOUGH the "kingdom of God," in its highest sense, certainly occupies space, we are quite sure, nevertheless, that we shall find heaven much more a state than a place. We know already, even here, that happiness does not depend on where we are. Happiness is a condition of mind. We carry about with us a feeling which makes the atmosphere, which determines the colour of the prospect. And what is all this? What is this great moral truth, which commends itself to every man's experience, but an approach to, and a part of, that truth, "The kingdom of God is within you"? But only a part; we have to look at it in a far higher meaning.

I. I believe that every one, in this present world, is gradually but surely ripening, and getting like the state—whichever the state may be—where he is to live for ever and for ever. The final condition of a saint in glory is only the growth and the increase and the extension of his life on earth. He has been constantly assimilating to his own perfected condition in another world. The heaven is in him long before he goes to heaven.

II. Heaven, we are led to expect, will be: (1) Light. But what are the emanations of that light? Truth, clearness, uprightness. And that is heaven. If you are a child of God, there is in your heart, transparency, strict justice, perfect truthfulness. The kingdom of heaven is within you. (2) Harmony. If you are a man that loves unity, if you hate variance, if you are doing all that in you lies to make the Church's unity—then, in so far, the kingdom of God is within you. (3) Singleness of purpose. Whichever of us can say, "One thing I do—whether I eat or drink, whatever I do, I try to do it to the glory of God"—then of that one I assert, "The kingdom of God is within you." (4) Humility—every angel covering his face with his wing. If I see a man very little in his own eyes I know

that the kingdom of God is within him. (5) Through all heaven, it is the one felt Presence of Christ which is, to all hearts, all their joy; because He is there, therefore it is what it is. And, just according to what Jesus is to you, and you are to Jesus—the more would an angel of truth, if he visited this church to-night, say of that soul of yours, "The kingdom of God is within you."

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 15.

REFERENCES: xvii. 21.—E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 163.—G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 219; C. Kingsley, *National Sermons*, p. 176; Bishop Boyd Carpenter, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., pp. 56, 92; *Homilist*, new series, vol. ii., p. 371. xvii. 22.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxii., No. 1,323. xvii. 22, 23.—D. G. Watt, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 104.

Chap. xvii., ver. 32.—"Remember Lot's wife."

WE have in this text a warning of a peculiar character; we see in it a type of the just wrath of God against those who, having been once mercifully delivered, shall afterwards fall back. Lot's wife was, by a distinguishing election of God, and by the hands of angels, saved from the overthrow of the wicked. We by the same deep counsel of God have been translated from death to life. She perished in the very way of safety. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Lot's wife is the type of those who fall from baptismal grace.

I. Any measure of declension from our baptismal grace is a measure of that same decline of which the end is hopelessly a fall from God. I say, it is a measure of the same movement; as a day is a measure of a thousand years. It is a state and inclination of heart which differs from absolute apostacy not in kind, but only in degree.

II. We must also learn from this example, that all such fallings back from our baptismal grace are great provocations of God's most righteous severity. The sin of Lot's wife was not only disobedience, but ingratitude. There are two things which God hates—backsliding and lukewarmness; and there are two which He will avenge—an alienated heart, and a will at war with His.

III. If these things be so, how shall we hold fast our steadfastness? There is no other sure way, but only this—ever to press on to a life of deeper devotion, to a sharper repentance and more earnest prayers, to a more sustained consciousness of God's continual presence, and to a keener

watchfulness against the first approaches of temptation; but one or two plain rules is all that can now be offered in particular. (1) First of all, then, beware of remembering past faults without repentance. The recollection of our sins is safe only when it is a part of our self-chastisement. To look back upon them without shame or sorrow, is to offend again. (2) Another thing to beware of is, making excuses for our present faults without trying to correct them. Nothing so wears down the sharpness of conscience, and dulls its perception of our actual state, as self-excusing. (3) Lastly, beware of those particular forms of temptation which have already once held you in their power, or sapped your better resolutions.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 34.

REFERENCES: xvii. 32.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,491; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 421; R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 1st series, p. 303; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 591.

Chap. xvii., vers. 34, 36.—"I tell you, that in that night . . . two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left."

I. OUR Lord in order to press upon us the great law of our self-determination, to help us to be honest with ourselves, carries us into the heart of things as they are in a startling fashion. He holds up to us three typical instances of sudden, sharp, and decisive separations which the crisis of His coming will produce. People that look the same now will be seen to be different. The day will declare them. Great occasions evolve character and create divergencies, but these divergencies had their roots long before, in the dark places of many and many a secret determination. In the closest friendship, in the most familiar intercourse, in the meeting of the same kind of circumstances divergencies grow and grow, separations are being evolved more and more decisively and infinitely. So powerless, so less than nothing are circumstances, so impotent to produce a result. So imperious is character, so free from the control of the very circumstances which are its daily occasions.

II. When Christ comes, when He meets me, then shall I know myself. Underneath us now yawns the pit of failure, close to us is the weakness born of past indulgence, but above us and with us is God, our Refuge, our Strength, our Hope. God, who will not be trifled with, who will not let us make excuses because He loves our real selves too well, and sees that they will not help us. Let us turn to Him who is our only Hope

amid the treasons of our wills and the disloyalties of our hearts; let us turn to Him as those who have trodden the same road before us turned in their desolation. "Nevertheless, I am always by Thee; Thou hast holden me by Thy right hand.' Thus kept and consecrated the busiest life may be the truest to God, and the most monotonous occupation may be the most fruitful, and the very distractions and infirmities that beset us, and the memories of old sins that haunt us, may drive us closer to God; and we, with all our consciousness of weakness and sin, may be found to be His own in wish and heart and aspiration in that day of separation, when the eagles shall be gathered together, when every life shall openly declare its only true and real desire.

R. EYTON, *Cambridge Review*, Feb. 24th, 1886.

REFERENCES: xvii. 37.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 12; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 233. xvii.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 359; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 263. xviii. 1.—J. Kennedy, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 33; E. W. Shalders, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 124; T. B. Stevenson, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 394; T. Child, *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 51; F. O. Morris, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 88; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 320; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. i., p. 293.

Chap. xviii., vers. 1, 2.—"And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint," etc.

I. THIS parable does not teach us to pray. There is no need that it should. Like the belief in a God, the moral sense of right and wrong, the hope of immortality, the expectation of a judgment, prayer seems as much an instinct of the soul as breathing, eating, drinking are instinctive actions of the body, which we need neither to be told, nor to learn, to do.

II. It teaches us how to pray. The point here is the fervour and frequency, the constancy and perseverance, or what has been called, in one word, the importunity of prayer. This implies, at least on our part, stated daily praise. To omit prayer is to go to battle, having left our weapons behind us in the tent; is to go to our daily labour without the strength imparted by a morning meal; is to attempt the bar where breakers roar and rocks hide their rugged heads without taking our pilot on board.

II. The parable teaches persevering prayer. It is hard, fainting work—praying. It is harder to pray than to preach.

We do not believe what we profess, nor feel what we say, nor wish what we ask; or, if we do, we do not take the right way of getting it. And how can we expect God to answer prayer when He sees, what we ourselves might see, that we are not earnest? If we were we would be urgent, praying in the house, by the way, on our beds, at our business—prayer sounding or silent, a constant flowing stream. By constant dropping the water wears a hole in the hardest stone. And who, as he sat on a jutting crag, amid the spray of the roaring, flashing cataract, has not marked how by her constant flow the river has polished its rugged sides, and worn out smooth runnels for its streams. So, as it is only perseverance in grace that can carry us up to heaven, it is only perseverance in prayer that can bring its blessings down. Such is the plan of redemption, the ordinance of God. "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force."

T. GUTHRIE, *The Parables in the Light of the Present Day*, p. 126.

REFERENCES: xviii. 1-5.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 125; vol. xxxii., p. 214. xviii. 1-8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 856; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 346; vol. xiii., p. 331; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 147; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 51; A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 117; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxii., p. 7. xviii. 1-14.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 382.

Chap. xviii., ver. 3.—**"And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary."**

THE Church's Widowhood. That the Church is, nay *must be*, in a state of widowhood appears from such things as these:—

I. The Father's purpose concerning her. That purpose has great things in store for her, in the ages to come; but at present her lot is to be weakness, poverty, hardship, and the endurance of wrong. Through much tribulation she must enter the kingdom.

II. Her conformity to her Lord. He is her pattern, not merely as to character, but as to the whole course of life. In Him she learns what her lot on earth is to be. He, the rejected One, even among His own, she must be rejected too; He, the hated One, she must be hated too. Better treatment than He met with she is not entitled to expect: nor should she wish to have.

III. Her standing by faith. It is the world's *unbelief* that so specially makes it the world; so it is the Church's *faith* that

makes her what she is, the Church. As one believing in a kingdom to come, she shakes herself free from the entanglements of time. She becomes a stranger here, having no continuing city, but satisfied with the tent of the desert, till she reach the city of habitation.

IV. The condition of the world out of which she is called. It is an evil world. It lieth in wickedness, and her calling is to come out from it, and, like Noah, to condemn it. She has nothing in common with it. All is uncongenial.

V. Her prospects. She is an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ Jesus. An everlasting kingdom, an unfading crown, an eternal weight of glory—these are her prospects. What has she, then, to do with a world where all these are unrecognised, nay, despised or disowned? In her orphanage, or strangership, or widowhood, she still moves before us as the separated, rejected, lonely one, in the midst of an unfriendly world, that far outnumbers her, and that feels itself strangely incommoded and made uncomfortable by the presence of one who sets light by all the precious and pleasurable things of earth, having her eye and her heart fixed upon something more glorious, of which the world knows nothing.

H. BONAR, *Short Sermons*, p. 376.

REFERENCES: xviii. 3-5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 81. xviii. 4.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 199. xviii. 5.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 32. xviii. 6.—*Homilist*, vol. v., p. 284.

Chap. xviii., vers. 6, 7.—**"And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?"**

I. WHAT is the central thought of this parable? The answer to this question is obvious. The central thought of the parable is the advantage to be derived from importunity in prayer. And the general fact which the story conveys is this: with man importunity will succeed, when the power of justice or affection would wholly fail. No one, I suppose, can doubt that there are many cases in which this is true, and so far the parable presents no difficulty.

II. But it is quite otherwise when we come to ask—What lesson is the parable meant to teach? What parallel is here drawn between the dealings of men with each other and the dealings of God with men? It is no merit, but a fault, in the selfish friend or the unjust judge, that importunity is needed to

wring from them that which should have been given to love or justice. How can we argue that because importunity has succeeded with the selfish men, and that altogether by acting on their selfishness, it will therefore succeed with one whose nature is wholly different? A selfish man is teased into granting a request to save himself from personal annoyance. Does this afford any probability that an unselfish man can be similarly influenced. Yet certainly this seems to be the argument of the parable. Here is the only *a fortiori* argument drawn from the parable which appears to be admissible: we may expect importunate prayer to succeed better with God than with man, not because the means used is stronger in the one case than in the other, but because it has no resistance to overcome. Delay in granting the petition there may be; even ultimate refusal there may be; but both are dictated by the wise mercy of God; and the obstacles by which the selfishness of humanity blocks the way of the petitioner find no place with Him.

J. H. JELLETT, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 68.

REFERENCE: xviii. 7.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 97.

Chap. xviii., ver. 8.—**"Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"**

I. NOTICE the peril—that of losing faith. Now, faith in reference to questions of revelation has three degrees, and only the last represents it in its completeness, though, indeed, as things go now we are apt to accept even, and only the first, with a sort of thankful surprise. (1) First, there is faith in a personal God, Maker and Owner of the universe, who, in the far distant past, in the mystery of His infinite power and wisdom, summoned everything into being. What theology calls by the cold name of Deism is, however, far beyond the reach of some thinkers now. Because science cannot discover God, reason is pertly bidden to treat Him as if He could not be discovered. (2) Then there is another table-land, whereon faith recognises, not only the being of God, but also His government; refuses to suppose that, exhausted with the labours of creation, He har ever since left the universe to take its own course, or, if aftes a fashion governing it, handcuffed by His own laws. (3) The third and final stage of Christian faith is, where the spirit of man worships the God of the creeds. God, that is, revealed and reconciled in His Incarnate Son, who, after He had perfected our redemption by His death, rose from the grave, and went back to heaven, from whence He sent His Holy Spirit to build

up His Church among men, until in the end of the days He comes back with His holy angels to judge both the quick and the dead. It is this faith—with a few all of it, with many some of it—that seems now to be perishing out of our midst, so as already to justify the Saviour's mournful question, "When I come back who will there be to believe on Me?

II. Such is our peril, but what is our safeguard? (1) We must each do the work given him to do, each be at his post. Let us more thoroughly master, more minutely examine, more devoutly study, more sincerely love, the great doctrines of our religion, never treating them as if they were something to be ashamed of, unfit for reasoning men and this superior time. (2) Then let us use, and enjoy, and deepen our faith by sharing it with others. The brightest, and bravest, and strongest, and blessedest souls, are those which feel their religion a trust; their faith a profession before many witnesses; their warfare not only fighting for themselves, but contending for their Master; their crown, when it comes to them from the King's hand sparkling beyond the brightness of the firmament, with the precious salvation of a brother's soul.

BISHOP THOROLD, *Good Words*, 1880, p. 60.

I. FAITH may mean no more than an assent to what is told. But the true account of faith is this—a belief in every revelation made by God, an acceptance of Divine grace in every mode and channel through which it is conveyed.

II. Why should Christ look for faith above all spiritual graces on His return? Because faith is the organ by which we accept both revelation and grace. Therefore, so far as His influence on man is concerned, Almighty God depends upon our faith. It is a condition of the success of His work; it is the only force which we can employ to frustrate His infinite power.

III. You cannot pray unless you have faith that the thing you want is in the hand of God to give.

IV. Besides men's faith in prayer, Christ's words point to their ready will to welcome Him on His return.

C. W. FURSE, *Sermons at Richmond*, p. 85.

I. CHRIST will come again after His Resurrection in three different senses:—(1) He will come again finally, and in the highest sense, when this world shall end, and we shall all rise to judgment; (2) He will come to each one of us finally, in the highest sense, when we each of us receive His call to die;

(3) He has come more than once, and I believe He will come more than once again, not finally, nor in the highest sense, either to all mankind or to each individual, but in a lower sense, and affording a sort of type or image of the higher: I mean, when He comes to bring upon the earth, or on some one or more nations, a great season of suffering, in which "the loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low." In this sense, He is said to have come when he destroyed Jerusalem; in this sense, also, He came more than three hundred years afterwards, when He destroyed the empire of Rome.

II. Now let us mark His own question. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith upon the earth?" And let us see what would be the answer to it, supposing that His coming in each one of the three senses which I have spoken of should be near, even at the doors. (1) May we for a moment be allowed to conceive the unspeakable awfulness of His coming in the highest sense of all? Should we then be filled with fear in our inmost hearts, as if certain death were coming upon us? or should we look up to Him whom we beheld amidst the blessed company of His saints and angels, as to one whom we have long known, long loved, long desired to see? (2) What would be our feelings were God to come in our generation in the lower sense of the term, if He were to visit this nation with a season of great misery, with famine and pestilence and war? Blessed are they who, like the three men in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, walk in their souls unhurt amidst the furnace of evil times, because the Son of God is with them. (3) When the Son of man cometh to us at death, shall He find faith in us? If we have no faith in Him now, we shall have none when He cometh; the lamp is not burning in us, but gone out. And when the cry strikes our ears that the Bridegroom is coming it will be too late to kindle it again; for while we are vainly going about to buy the oil, He comes, and they who are ready—not who hope to be ready by-and-by—can alone go in with Him to the marriage.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. v., p. 15.

REFERENCES: xviii. 8.—A. P. Stanley, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 229; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 66; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 242. xviii. 9.—F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 36; C. Jones, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 543. xviii. 9-14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 346; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 478; *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 332; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 81; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 500; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 79; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 312.

Chap. xviii., vers. 10-13.—"Two men went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican," etc.

THERE are five points in which the Pharisee and the publican agree; there are five points in which they differ, and there are five special lessons which the incident urges upon the attention of all men in all ages.

I. The points in which they agree are obvious. (1) They had the same object. Their object was to pray. (2) They got to the same place. Two men went up into the Temple. They met on common ground; they both spoke in the Temple. (3) They were in the Temple at the same time. That is clear from the fact that the Pharisee said with a contemptuous side-nod of his lofty head, "or even as this publican." (4) They addressed the same God. (5) Each of the men talked about himself. Each described his own case.

II. Look next at the five points of dissimilarity. (1) The one was self-satisfied, the other was self-discontented. Not one word of self-depreciation escapes the lips of the Pharisee; not one word of self-praise is uttered by the publican. (2) The Pharisee was socially contemptuous, the publican was self-condemned. The Pharisee made short work of other men. He detached himself from society, standing loftily above it, and awarding to it the most self-complacent maledictions. The publican made no reference to other men. He was filled with self-shame and self-sorrow. The question lay between himself and God, not between himself and other men. (3) The one lived in duty; the other hoped in mercy. He only truly lives who lives in hope of the mercy of God. The Pharisee showed a well-brushed coat, the publican pointed to a wounded heart. (4) The Pharisee saw separate points of excellence, whereas the publican was stunned by the condition of the whole character. (5) The one was flippant, the other was reverent. Where there is no reverence, there can be no worship.

III. What are the lessons which the incident urges upon the attention of men in all ages? (1) That self-righteousness is unrighteousness; (2) that self-trust is practical atheism; (3) that social contempt is not personal piety; (4) that self-boasting goes before destruction: (5) that man's only standing-ground before God is the ground of God's sovereign mercy.

PARKER, *City Temple*, vol. i., p. 145.

REFERENCES: xviii. 10.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 428;

A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 136; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 219; R. S. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 153; Bishop Lightfoot, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 65. xviii. 10-14.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 158; vol. iv., p. 465. xviii. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 406; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 113. xviii. 12.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 236; A. Plummer, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 207. xviii. 13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 216; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 65; 4th series, p. 199; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 245; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 74; R. Scott, *University Sermons*, p. 182.

Chap. xviii., ver. 14.—"I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

I. We are not saved from the danger of self-righteousness by our full knowledge and hearty recognition of the doctrines of grace. The Pharisee did not dream of taking to himself the credit of the excellence which he supposed himself to have attained to. He acknowledged it to be all God's work in him. He carries with him the spirit of trusting to himself that he is righteous, and despising others, at the very moment that he is thanking God who has made him to differ from them.

II. Righteousness is not self-righteousness. The irreligious man is apt to set down as self-righteous every one who can claim to be better than he pretends to be. There is nothing wrong in being righteous, or in doing good works. The only thing to be frightened about is, if the righteousness be not real, or the works not truly good. The less the real righteousness, the greater the danger of self-righteousness.

III. The best practical rule for avoiding the dangers which arise from comparing ourselves with others is to strive to keep ever before our minds as our rule of life, the character of Him who gave us an example, that we should follow in *His* steps. There is no example, but one, which may not mislead us—mislead us even when we have succeeded in arriving at the standard we aim at, or in going beyond it. There is but One in striving to resemble whom we can never be led astray; One whose character the more closely we study and the more thoroughly we love, the more nearly we approach to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. The contemplation of such an Example, and the contrast which you know yourself to be, cannot but deepen your sense of sin, and

drive you to the supplication—"God, be merciful to me a sinner."

G. SALMON, *Non-miraculous Christianity*, p. 187.

REFERENCES: xviii. 14.—R. Winterbotham, *Sermons and Expositions*, p. 243; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 31. xviii. 15, 16.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children*, 3rd series, p. 72. xviii 15-17.—Shepherd, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 309. xviii. 15-27.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 251.

Chap. xviii., ver. 16.—"Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."

I. ONE sense in which this text is true is, that the great company of those who are indeed the Saviour's people is made up of those who resemble little children in certain distinctive features of their character. The Church Militant, and far more the Church Triumphant, consists of such as these unsophisticated ones, fresh from God who is our home—their birth, perhaps, for what we know, a sleep and a forgetting; and the heaven they came from still around them in their infancy, as a poet of the purest inspiration has sung—such in temper, in disposition, in character. Of all things you could point to in this world, the thing that could give you the best idea of the essential spirit that is most childlike, is the spirit of an innocent and happy little child. Like teachable, like humble, like gentle, like affectionate, like confiding—should all true Christians be. Even worldly genius has told how beautiful it is to see something yet of the child's warm heart in the man with hoary hairs; something of the unspoiled freshness of infancy and its home-bred simplicity, abiding still with one who has seen the great world, and borne an honoured part in its conflicts and toils; one of those who, as St. Paul would have it, in malice are children, but in understanding are men.

II. There is another sense in which these words may be taken, which may well be cherished by most of our firesides. I believe that we may take these words of our Saviour in their literal meaning, as implying that the kingdom of God, the assembly of redeemed souls in heaven, is in great measure made up of little children. All that die in infancy are saved, and half the human beings born into this world die in infancy. If the entire human race should be gathered, sanctified, and forgiven, before the throne above, still each second one there would never have known more of this sinful and

sorrowful world than comes within the brief experience of early childhood.

> "God took them in His mercy, as lambs untasked, untried;
> He fought the fight for them; He won the victory, and they are sanctified."
>
> A. K. H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson*, 3rd series, p. 141.

REFERENCES: xviii. 16.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 102; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 171; S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, p. 275. xviii. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxiv., No. 1,439; E. W. Shalders, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 3. xviii. 22.—E. R. Conder, *Drops and Rocks*, p. 249. xviii. 25.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 369. xviii. 27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 233. xviii. 28-30.—H. B. Bruce, *The Training of Twelve*, p. 262. xviii. 29.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 153. xviii. 30.—Phillips Brooks, *Twenty Sermons*, p. 316.

Chap. xviii., ver. 31.—**"Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished," etc.**

WHY Christ suffered.

I. The answer to this question is very simple. He suffered as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. It was the ultimate and perfecting act of His obedience, to carry down into death that death-sentenced nature which He had taken into the Godhead; to subject His Divine Person to the dark—and to us utterly mysterious—contact with the actuality of death; and to put by His almighty power of casting off from Himself the sentence of death which He bore about Him. This is why Christ died; that He might in His own Body, as the Second Head and including Representative of mankind, pay the penalty of death which rested on that manhood which was summed up in Him. The Godhead of our blessed Lord is an element absolutely necessary to the belief of even the least portion of the benefits and effects of His death. If a man do not firmly and clearly hold that, he has not a notion of what is meant by the doctrine of Christ's atonement for sin. His entire oneness with the Father lies at the very root of all.

II. I proceed to our second enquiry. Granted, that it was necessary for Christ to submit to death in order to the taking away of the sin of the world, why did He die *as He did?* First I say in answer, that we cannot tell how much of deep humiliation and desertion and anguish was absolutely necessary, in the

covenant which infinite wisdom arranged, to make that death the full and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world. The analogy of the Redeemer's whole life leads us to the humble inference that nothing less than such an amount of self-denial, and endurance of pain, and contradiction of sinners, was enough for the accomplishment of His mighty purpose, even in its hidden and unfathomable recesses, where it flowed forth from unity with the Father's will. (2) But if we look at this same matter from another and a human point of view, even to *us* there may be made plain and full and sufficient reason why these sufferings should have been undertaken. Our blessed Lord sums it up for us in a few simple words "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." These stupendous sufferings of the Son of God were undertaken to put away sin; the sin of the world; the sin of each man; and they were undertaken that each man might be mightily constrained by the power of the Divine love shown in them, to take up the freedom thus purchased for him; to see himself complete in Christ his satisfaction before God; to live as Christ's freeman, prevailing over and conquering sin, and daily renewed with God.

H. ALFORD, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 166.

Chap. xviii., vers. 31-6.

I. THE announcement by Christ of His approaching sacrifice was the announcement of the solution to the enigma which all the ages of mankind had been endeavouring to solve—how to obtain peace with a justly offended God. The need of such a propitiation combined with a deep sense of human misery, runs through all heathen religious systems; all have their legends of a bygone golden age, when gods and men lived in closer union, when the earth brought forth of its own accord all that could minister to man's requirements or delight, and universal justice prevailed among mankind. All religions have been occupied with the sense of sin, its origin and its abolition. Under the deep sense of the need of reconciliation, the heathen of old thought that they could actually of themselves do what would atone for their sins. We see in their sacrifice a strange admixture of what is highest and what is lowest, a miserable delusion, and yet a near guess at the true solution of the problem that they were unable to solve.

II. The sacrifice of Christ at once sanctioned and abolished all the sacrificial worship that preceded it; and, as a matter of

history, we find that after the sacrifice of Christ, animal sacrifice with shedding of blood came suddenly to an end, while henceforth sacrificial terms and expressions began to group themselves round one Person and one Head—the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. And this faith affords a wondrous confirmation of the death of Christ as the true atonement for the sins of the whole world, we cannot understand sacrifice rightly until we survey from the height of Golgotha; until we seek to understand it from this point of view, we are like the disciples in the text, who, when our Lord spoke of His approaching sacrifice, "understood none of these things."

R. BAKER, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 81.

REFERENCES: xviii. 31.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 89; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. ii., pp. 321, 331; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 49. xviii. 31-4; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 282. xviii. 34.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. viii., p. 60; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 211; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 1. xviii. 35.—*Homilist*, vol. v., p. 52. xviii. 35-43.—T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 196; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 56. xviii. 36.—Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vi., p. 539. xviii. 36, 37.—J. Stoughton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 113. xviii. 37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 906; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 95. xviii. 41.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 80. xviii. 42.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,162; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 89; J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 191. xviii.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven*, p. 277.

Chap. xix., vers. 1-10.—"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus," etc.

I. A WHOLE paragraph is devoted to the delineation of one man's life, while so many great subjects are hardly touched upon in the Christian Scriptures. Yet let us not complain of what looks to us like capriciousness and incompleteness of Divine revelation, for in these portrayals of individuals we have not only the most practical aspects of the Christian faith, but we get nearer to God than would otherwise have been possible.

II. Zacchæus sought to see Jesus through natural curiosity, yet such curiosity may be turned to the highest uses; Zacchæus only sought to see the Man, but in the end he saw the Saviour; he desired to see a wonder, in the end he was made into a wonder himself.

III. Zacchæus would never have been chief among the publi-

cans, and been rich, if he had succumbed to difficulties. His character was brought out by opposition. I contend that, what ever a man's disadvantages may be, he can see Jesus Christ if he so determine in his heart.

IV. Jesus Christ *looked, saw,* and *said.* When Christians look and see and say, there will go forth into the world such an evangelising commission as never yet sought the recovery of men.

V. "He made haste, and came down, and received Him joyfully." This is a striking harmony with all that we have seen of Zacchæus. The man who could run and climb was just the man to make haste in coming down, and to give a joyful answer to such an appeal. Zacchæus would never have known himself if he had not first known Jesus Christ. It is ever noteworthy that by contact with the Saviour men become greater, and to their fuller strength is added all the charm of generosity. In this case there is a noticeable combination of liberality and justice; the poor and the wronged alike feel the blessed influence of this man's renewal. All with whom he had to do were the better for his having received Jesus Christ into his heart.

PARKER, *City Temple*, 1870, p. 74.

REFERENCES: xix. 1.—T. T. Lynch, *Sermons for My Curates*, p. 71. xix. 1-10.—H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 373; R. Rainy, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 296; *Homilist*, vol. vii., p. 332, *Ibid.*, new series, vol. i., p. 130. xix. 3.—*Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 194; Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 302. xix. 5.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 104; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. ii., No. 73. xix. 7.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1,319.

Chap. xix., ver. 9.—"This day is salvation come to this house forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

I. ZACCHÆUS was, humanly speaking, in as unfavourable a situation for turning to God, as anyone could be at that time. He was one of a set of men who might emphatically be called "that which is lost." And, therefore, when we find our Lord saying of this man, "This day is salvation come to this house," for that "he also is a son of Abraham," it is impossible not to perceive the freeness and fulness of the grace of the Gospel, which—at once, with no long probation of penitence or trial required—at once, forgiving all the past and trusting for the future; declares to the lost sinner that He was was one of Abraham's children, and partaker therefore of Abraham's blessing.

II. This is so true that to deny it were to deny the very foundation of the Gospel. But in giving this statement, I have not yet given the whole picture contained in the account of Zacchæus, and what remains is no less essential. The forgiveness was entire and immediate, because the repentance had been no less unhesitating and no less entire. Zacchæus "sought to see Jesus"—we know not with how much of mere curiosity, nor with what an imperfect knowledge; but he sought and took pains to see Him; and He who is found by all that seek Him, said immediately, "Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to-day I must abide at thy house." But when Christ was come to him, when his first imperfect desires for good had been so largely blessed, then the love of Christ constrained him, and with no reserves, with no hesitation, he gave up all his heart to Him. He cares not for the sacrifice; he does not ask whether strict justice required so large a measure of restitution—much less whether the law was ever likely to enforce it; but he wishes to free himself wholly from the accursed thing, unlawful gain; he wishes to judge himself, that he be not judged of the Lord; he cannot bear that any portion of sin or sinful profit should remain in that heart and house which Christ and Christ's Spirit had deigned to visit. So, then, no less complete and unreserved than the gift of the Gospel forgiveness is the feeling and the act of Christian repentance. Here, then, we find the Gospel in all its entireness; we see what is meant by forgiveness and also what is meant by repentance. Let our repentance be as full, as reserved, as immediate, as that of Zacchæus; and this day, yea this hour, is salvation come into our house, and it is proved that we also are sons of Abraham.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 117.

REFERENCES: xix. 9.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, No. viii; S. A. Tipple, *Echoes of Spoken Words*, p. 71.

Chap. xix., ver. 10.—**"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."**

THE Redeemer's Errand to this World.

I. We find in our text Christ's estimate of the condition of humanity. It is something that is lost. Man is a lost thing. You may look at him in many lights. He is a toiling, hard-working creature. He is an anxious, careworn creature. But for the Redeemer's purpose, the characteristic that surmounted

and included and leavened and ran through all the rest, was, that he is a lost creature. All error from the right way; all distance from our heavenly Father's house; all destitution and danger and impossibility of return, and imminence of final ruin, are conveyed in that one word, *lost*. Trace that word's meaning out into its various shades and ramifications, and you will find that it implies, as no other can, all that we are; all that makes our need of the Saviour—His sacrifice, His Spirit, His intercession.

II. The text reminds us of what the blessed Redeemer did for us in our lost estate. He came to seek and save us. The world, so to speak, pushed itself into notice when it fell. Ah! the little planet might have circled round the sun, happy and holy; and never been singled out from the bright millions of which it is the least. But as it is, perhaps this fallen world's name may be on the lips of angels, and in the thoughts of races that never sinned. We, when lost, as it might seem, in hopeless loss, were singled out thereby for the grandest, most precious, most glorious blessing that, so far as we know, was ever given by the Almighty. The Son of God left the glories of heaven to die for us. The Son of Man came to seek and save that which was lost. It is, indeed, a mysterious thing, a thing not to be wholly explained by human wit, that the Son of God stood by till man had lost himself, and then came, at cost of painful quests, to seek and save him; when we might think He could so easily have kept man from wandering at all. May we not think that, apart from those grand, inscrutable reasons which the Almighty has for permitting the entrance of evil into His universe—those reasons which no man knows—the fact of the peculiar interest and pleasure which are felt in an evil remedied, a spoiled thing mended, a lost thing found, a wrong thing righted, may cast some light upon the nature of the Divine feeling toward the world and our race? When all evil that can be remedied is done away with, may not this world seem better to its Almighty Maker's eye, than even when He beheld it, all very good, upon the evening of the sixth day?

A. K. H. B., *Counsel and Comfort from a City Pulpit*, p. 180.

The conventional religionists of our Lord's time were very much shocked and scandalised at His manner of life. It was sufficiently surprising that He should be found so frequently in the society of peasants, and of women, and of children, instead

of courting the patronage of the wealthy and the great; but it was perfectly outrageous that He should have become the friend of thieves and harlots;—and these respectable persons very frequently expressed their astonishment and their indignation at His strange conduct. And Jesus said to them, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." They had never grasped the fact that Christ was a great Physician, and that His business was not to go to those who were in perfect health, but to go to those who were ill; and, first of all, to those whose case was most desperate.

I. Now in this Christ has left you and me an example that we should walk in His steps; and if we have the mind of Christ we shall follow the wandering sheep into the wilderness, and shall never rest until we find it. Our business is to go to the prodigal sons of God, and to persuade them to come home again; and, however far off they are, we must follow them to the distant country, and we must refuse to come back without them.

II. It is a remarkable thing in this parable that Christ makes no provision for defeat. He does not say what we are to do if they refuse to come in. He takes it for granted that we must overcome if we are in earnest. Christ everywhere assumes that we shall not fail. It was said by a great Latin historian of Alexander the Great that the secret of his marvellous victories, by which the world was brought to his feet, was this: he wisely dared to think nothing of imaginary dangers. All sorts of reports reached him with regard to the difficulties of invading Asia, and so forth, but he put them all on one side. The devil is always ready to exhibit a few ghosts of difficulties to terrify weak saints. Let us depise the ghosts; there is nothing in them. We cannot fail if our heart is full of love to God, and of sympathy with our fellow-Christians. The only real hindrance to the progress of the Gospel is unbelief in the form of downright selfishness.

H. P. HUGHES, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 184.

REFERENCES: xix. 10.—F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 190; Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 268; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iv., No. 204; vol. xix., No. 1,100. xix. 11.—T. T. Lynch, *Sermons for My Curates*, p. 103. xix. 11-27.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiv., p. 105; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., pp. 387, 385; vol. viii., p. 233; R. C. Trench, *Notes on the Parables*, p. 511. xix. 12-27.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 490; H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 427; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 273.

Chap. xix., ver. 13.—"And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come."

We have four things here, which, keeping to the metaphor of the text, I may designate as the Capital, the Business, the Profits, and the Audit.

I. The Capital. A pound was a very little thing for a prince who was going to get a kingdom to leave with his servants to trade upon. The smallness of the gift is, I think, an essential part of the representation. May it not be intended to point out to us this lesson—how small after all, even the high gift that we all receive alike here is, in comparison with what we are destined to receive when the kingdom comes? Even the salvation that is in Jesus Christ, as it is at present experienced on earth, is but like the one poor pound that was given to the servants, as compared with the unspeakable wealth that shall be theirs—the ten cities, the five cities, and all the glories of supremacy and sovereignty, when He comes.

II. Now a word about the Trading. You Christian men and women ought to make your Christian life and your Christian service a matter of business. Put the same virtues into it that some of you put into your trade. Your best business in this world, as the *Shorter Catechism* has it, is to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. And the salvation that you have got you have to trade upon, to make a business of, to work it out, in order that, by working it out, by living upon it, and living by it, applying its principles to daily life, and seeking to spread it among other people, it may increase and fructify in your hands.

III. The Profits. The immediate results are in direct correspondence and proportion to the immediate activity and diligence. The truths that you live by, you will believe more because you live by them. The faculties that you employ in Christ's service will grow and increase by reason of your employment of them.

IV. The Audit. "Till I come;" or, "Whilst I am coming." As if all through the ages the king was coming, coming nearer. We have to work as remembering that everyone of us shall give an account of himself and his trading unto the Proprietor when He comes back.

A. Maclaren, *Christian Commonwealth*, Sept. 2nd, 1886.

References: xix. 13.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 9th series, p. 5; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 142; *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 264; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 225; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 271. xix. 14.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 154.

Chap. xix., ver. 17.—"Because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities."

THERE is a principle in this award which regulates God's dealings with us in either world. And it is this—the ground and secret of all increase is faithfulness. And we may all rejoice that this is the rule of God's moral gifts, for had anything else except faithfulness been made the condition, many would have been unable—or, at least, would have thought themselves unable—to advance at all. But faithfulness is in everybody's power; it is a simple, practical, every-day thing.

I. But what is faithfulness? A serious sense of responsibility leading to exactness in the discharge of duty; or the recognition of our accountability to our own conscience; or a feeling of having been entrusted with anything by God producing a desire to use it as He intended, that He may be glorified. (1) Faithfulness to convictions. So long as a man has not silenced them by sin, the heart is full of still, small voices, speaking to him everywhere. So long as a man has not by rough treatment severed them, the heart is full of little secret cords which are always drawing him. Those are convictions. Be faithful to them; for if you are unfaithful, they will get weaker and weaker, fewer and fewer, till they go out. (2) Faithfulness in little things to men. (*a*) It is of the utmost importance that you be scrupulously accurate and just in all your most trivial transactions of honour and business with your fellow-creatures. Do not imagine there is no religion in these things; no man's soul will prosper who is not a rigidly honest man—honest in the *minutiæ;* (*b*) The acquisition and use of influence are great matters of faithfulness.

II. Faithfulness determines increase. To employ well the present is to command the future. The growth of your soul hangs upon its own fidelity; and more love, more joy, more peace, more presence, more Christ—are given to those who, day by day, are true to the love, the joy, the peace, the presence, the Christ, which they already have. And that for two reasons: (1) The natural law, which pervades all nature, that growth is the offspring of exercise; (2) the sovereign will of a just God to increase the gifts of those who use them.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1868, p. 149.

REFERENCES: xix. 17.—A. P. Peabody, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 127; D. G. Watt, *Ibid.*, vol. xxviii., p. 77; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 8th series, p. 228

Chap. xix., vers. 20-6.—"And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin," etc.

"To him that hath shall be given."

I. The excuse of the slothful servant is the excuse of all lazy people. They cry themselves down lest they should be called upon to work; they avoid the duties of life till the world forgets to ask them to fulfil their duties, though God does not forget. They glide through a useless existence to a forgotten death, having buried themselves before they are buried by man, and they think that their sloth shall be continued beyond the grave—that they shall sleep there an eternal sleep; for what hope or faith in endless life can these dead men possess? But they are rudely awakened in the world to come. They find themselves standing before the tribunal of the Lord of utility, the Master of work. He asks for His own with usury. We have here in the parable a particular instance of this class of person, especially applicable to the Pharisee of the period. What was the reason this one-talented man had drifted into idleness and uselessness? One might call it a religious reason; he had gone on arguing about the nature of God, losing himself in speculations as to the character and work of God, instead of making use of what God had given him, till he finally arrived at doing nothing. These are the men and women who make the secularist objection of some weight—that thinking of insoluble questions, as they are called, unfits a man for life and work. The objection is fairly made against persons of this kind. For to such the questions will ever remain insoluble. Action, not speculation, finds out God. It is love and justice wrought out in life, not intellectual discussion and argument, which bring heaven near.

II. Let us pass on to the judgment. "Give it to him that hath ten talents." At first sight it seems strange that he that has most should have more; and it was thus it struck the standers-by. "Lord, he hath ten talents." On the contrary, it was strict justice; the sentence was, first, in full accordance with the wisdom we derive from our observations of men; and, secondly, with the laws of the working of the universe. It was a mere sentimental objection. Take, first, that side of it which had to do with the slothful servant. Why take from him his one talent with which he had done no harm? Give it back to him, and let him have another chance. The man who has ten talents has enough already. Yes, he will have another chance

when his character has changed, but it will have to be changed by punishment, not by weak tenderness. He must be made to feel his uselessness, forced to alter his view of God and of himself, or else all the giving in the world is only doing men harm. To him that hath it is given. Grace is born from grace; to him who has love more love is given; he who is true can assimilate more truth; he who is pure deepens in purity; and by the working of this law the world is blessed, for the best is given to those who can use it best.

S. A. BROOKE, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 125.

REFERENCES: xix. 20.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., p. 149; J. N. Norton, *The King's Ferry-boat*, p. 102.

Chap. xix., ver. 21.—"For I feared Thee."

THE Religion of Fear.

Such was the account, the only account, which a person could give why he had loved a useless, and because a useless a wrecked, life. There was indeed in his wickedness a strange inconsistency and contradiction. For he who could say, and truly say, as the secret of his whole life, "I feared Thee," was nevertheless the man to stand up with a most shameless effrontery, and say to the God whom he dreaded, words too insolent to be used to a fellow-man. So exceedingly remote may fear be from reverence; so easily may dread make common cause with daring.

I. You will observe that this man in the parable did not fear God because God was great and lofty and holy. Had his fear rested on that ground, probably he would not have been much blamed; or more probably still, his mind would not have been allowed to remain in that state. He did not, in fact, fear God for anything which God really is, he feared God for what God is not. And here was at once the nature of his fear and its guilt—it arose from false views of God, for which the man was responsible. There are three results which appear to me almost inevitable from a hard, cold religion of fear. It is sure to make religion a separate thing from life. The religion of that man will be a parenthesis;—religion the act, the world the feeling; religion a necessity, the world a delight; religion shadowy, the world real; religion an accident, the world the man. It is all summed up in the history of the ancient Samaritans: "They feared the Lord, and served their own gods."

II. The service of fear is sure to produce cunning. I see it again in the owner of the buried talent. He had not love or principle enough to do what he was told—"Occupy till I come." But there must be something for him to show, and something for him to say when his Master comes back. Therefore he just does what costs him nothing, and makes up by stratagem for what he leaves undone.

III. Fear paralyses energy. It was a true chain which the man drew. "I did nothing because I was afraid." There is an awful negativeness about fear, a solitude, a desolation. The fact is, we all work up towards a final idea—but if there is no final idea, what shall we work up to? Take away that final idea, and life in its immortality ceases to be.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 240.

REFERENCES: xix. 22-32.—W. Hubbard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 378. xix. 26.—T. Hammond, *Ibid.*, vol. xv., p. 113. xix. 28.—*Homilist*, vol. v., p. 502. xix. 29.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 136. xix. 29-44.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 263. xix. 29-48.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 328. xix. 30-40.—Parker, *Cavendish Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 121 xix. 37.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 1. xix. 37-40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 678; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 272. xix. 40.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 83; E. Maclean, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 5.

Chap. xix., ver. 41.—"And when He was come near He beheld the city, and wept over it," etc.

I. IT is interesting and instructive to notice in this passage how the Lord regards men—both in their corporate and their individual capacities. He made us, and He knows what is in man. He knows that each immortal stands on His own feet, and must meet with God alone, as far as regards all the rest of humanity. But He knows and recognises also, that we are made with social instincts and faculties, that we cannot exercise the functions of our nature without society; and that we are all affected deeply by our intercourse with others, both as regards our time and our eternity. In one aspect, each man stands or falls for himself alone; in another aspect, we grasp each other, and, like the victims of a shipwreck, either help to sink or help to save one another. It is in the latter aspect that our Lord regarded the inhabitants of Jerusalem as He looked on them across the glen from the neighbouring mountain's brow. They were brethren in iniquity. Hand was joining in hand in preparation for the highest crime ever done in the universe. They were leagued in a dark covenant to crucify the Son of God.

Looking down on Jerusalem, and making great lamentation over it, the ground of His grief was, not that they had sinned and so brought on themselves condemnation—in that there was nothing peculiar to Jerusalem ;—what makes Him weep is, that they will not accept redemption at His hands.

II. "In this thy day"—Jerusalem had a day. Every community and every person has a day—a day of mercy. If in that day the lost shall turn they shall get life in the Lord. But if they allow their day to pass, there remaineth only darkness—"a fearful looking for of judgment." "The things which belong unto thy peace." The things which God had fixed in the eternal covenant, and revealed in the fulness of time, were things that Jerusalem did not know. Like the wayside, hard, trodden ground, they did not open their hearts to take in the seed of the Word. The lesson that we learn from the text is this: that Jesus, the Author and Possessor and Giver of eternal redemption to the lost, rejoices when they accept His gift, and weeps over them when they neglect it.

W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 326.

REFERENCES: xix. 41.—J. Greenhough, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 291 ; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 611 ; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 369; C. Kingsley, *Discipline and other Sermons*, p. 290 ; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 104 ; *Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 156 ; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,570; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 92; J. Armstrong, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 28; J. Keble *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity*, part i., p. 353 ; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. xx. ; *Ibid.*, *The Life of Duty*, vol. ii., p. 85 ; W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 152 ; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 21.

Chap. xix., vers. 41, 42.

I. IN the case before us spiritual indifference was the sign of concealed ruin.

II. While spiritual indifference conceals the downward course of the soul's life, it at the same time hides the Christ who alone can save.

III. In spiritual indifference Christ saw: (1) A self-wrought ruin ; (2) ruin rapidly becoming hopeless.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 181.

REFERENCES: xix. 41, 42.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 7th series, p. 143 ; G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 86; C. Kingsley, *Town and Country Sermons*, p. 237; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 238; *Homilist*, new series, vol. i., p. 522. xix. 41-4.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 233; *Ibid.*, *Forty-eight Sermons*, vol. i., p. 359. xix. 43, 44.—W C. E. Newbolt, *Counsels of Faith and Practice*, p. 229.

Chap. xix., ver. 44.—"Because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

To the account which St. Matthew gives of our Lord's entry into Jerusalem, St. Luke adds the passage of which these words are part. Let us take them home to ourselves in the trial which is ever going on of our own lives. The day of visitation, we may be sure, comes in one shape or another to us all. Not to know the time of our visitation means not to recognise the significance and the bearing of those trials for which we live, which search our hearts and test their soundness. It is not to know when God gives us some fresh opportunity of good, not to be alive to the openings and the secret leadings which come to us all in due season for a decisive step in the higher choice of a higher life; not to recognise when the time comes, as it comes to all, which is meant especially to suit our necessities, to offer us a door of escape, to encourage and assist us in doing some good thing for God.

I. There is one kind of visitation which many of us are going through now, as real as if we had to make up our minds, or take our side in some difficult question of right or wrong, in some critical decision as to whether we will walk in the ways of evil or of good. How many of us are leading a quiet and peaceful life, an uninterrupted life, without anything greatly to disturb or trouble us—no great sorrow, no great pain, no great fear, no great disadvantage to struggle with, no great care to weigh us down? There are the common temptations and burdens which belong to the lot of all men; but these surely are little to speak of when we think what other men have had—have now—to go through; what might have come upon us, and has not. And in this kind of life we go on undisturbed, it may be, from year to year. But there are two things to be remembered. One is, that without superstitiously vexing ourselves with the misgiving that God does bring evil upon us in proportion to good, it yet is obviously true that all this quiet cannot go on as it is for ever, that we must expect some time or other, some of the severer trials of life; that it is not likely that we should always escape pain, or vexation, or sickness so entirely, at least, as we are doing now. We are still men, and under the covenant of sickness and death. This is one thing; and the other, and even more important, is this—this time of quiet is a time of visitation. In this time of peace and regular work, and quiet days and nights of sweet sleep, He is trying us, He is

training us, and He is giving us time to fit ourselves, insensibly it may be, to meet the harsher ways of His Providence. Surely it is but too easy in the midst of peace and mercy to forget the great seriousness of life, where we are going, whom we have to deal with, what He has given us to do, whom we shall meet when we are dead, how we shall give an account of what we have had and enjoyed. And if we let all this slip out of mind we are missing our day, we are hearing the call of God without heeding, we are failing under our appointed trial, the trial of God's loving tenderness, just as if the trial were one of severity and sorrow, and suffering, and we were murmuring. The time of our visitation is upon us and we are not knowing it.

II. One word more. Without frightening ourselves with fears and fancies, which in the shape in which we dwell upon them, will probably never be realised, it is likely that we shall all of us have to be troubled in one way or another. If it is now with us a time of peace and quiet, now is the time to fit ourselves to meet trouble if it should come—not by foolishly vexing ourselves about it, but by arming ourselves with that faith and trust in God, those steady regular habits of relying upon Him, and committing ourselves to His hand, which will alone help us, alone keep us up when the weather changes and the storm begins to rise. Now you have no pain to take off your thoughts, to weaken your bodies, to cloud your faculties, now you have no bitterness of sorrow to fill your heart; you have time to think, to learn, to consider, to give calm attention to what most concerns your peace. If this be your lot, if this is the manner of your visitation, see that you recognise it, and see that you do not waste it and trifle it away.

R. W. CHURCH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 353.

REFERENCES: xix. 44.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xx., p. 113; J. Keble, *Sermons for Sundays after Trinity* part i., p. 333.

Chap. xix., vers. 45, 46.—**"And He went into the Temple, and began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought;" etc.**

THE Cleansing of the Temple.

In this passage we notice:—

I. Our Lord's zeal—that zeal of which the Psalmist said, speaking prophetically: "The zeal of Thine house hath even eaten me." Let Christ our Lord be in this as in other things a pattern to us; let the honour of God be with us a governing

principle; if the command of God be clear one way, then, even though everybody be on the other side, let us have the courage to take our stand on His command. And perhaps a little more courage on our part would be rewarded with the same kind of victory which our Lord obtained; men's consciences were convinced and they yielded to His word, and so I think it will frequently happen in our time.

II. Again, the conduct of our Lord shows us the reverence that is due to God's house. The Jewish Temple was emphatically a house of prayer; it was a place where God had promised His special presence to those who came to worship; and whatever honour was due to the Temple, as the house of God and the place of prayer, is due to the Christian Church. The tables of money-changers must not be here; this is no place for thoughts of gain, it is a profanation of God's Temple to bring them here. Christ would not allow any money-dealings in the Temple of old, and He will not allow them here; wherefore we should remember that all thoughts of worldly profit are to be left outside the Church porch. This is no place for them—this is a house of prayer, the house of God.

III. We are reminded by our Lord's cleansing of the Temple in the days of His flesh of that awful cleansing of His Temple which will one day take place, when all that is vile and offensive shall be cast out of His Temple, and everything that maketh a lie cast into the lake of brimstone. Let each one of us ask himself: "Will Christ, when He comes to judgment say of me, 'Take this man hence'?"

BISHOP HARVEY GOODWIN, *Parish Sermons*, 1st series, p. 292.

REFERENCES: xix. 45, 46.—H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 27. xix. 45-8.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 181; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 141. xix. 46.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 255. xix. 48.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 36. xx. 4.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 31; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99. xx. 9-17.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii. p. 40. xx. 9-18.—H. Calderwood, *The Parables*, p. 317; A. B. Bruce, *The Parabolic Teaching of Christ*, p. 447. xx. 18.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 362. xx. 20.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 97. xx. 24.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 54.

Chap. xx., ver. 25.—**"And He said unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's, and unto God the things which be God's."**

I. LET us look at the use which has so long been made of our Lord's reply, and ask whether it is justifiable or wise. His

words have been perpetually quoted, as if "Cæsar" meant civil government, and "God" ecclesiastical government, and as if Cæsar and God had separate spheres of jurisdiction, each limiting the other. All intelligent students of the New Testament know that our Lord has made no such distinction as He is popularly supposed to have made. The question on which He was asked to pronounce had nothing whatever to do with the rival claims of Church and State; their respective rights were not even contemplated, the cunning cavillers who had conspired to entangle Him knew nothing of the distinction between the two. It was indeed a distinction utterly foreign to the Jewish mind. What feature in the prophetic writings is more marked than the interpretation of religion and politics?

II. Our Lord here recognises no division of allegiance. He does not regard man as under two masters—as owing duty to Cæsar and duty to God. No; God is set forth by Him always and everywhere as the sole Lord of man's being and powers. Nothing man has can be Cæsar's in contradiction to that which is God's. Christ claims all for the Sovereign Master. Rightly understood, therefore, the great precepts of the text are in perfect accord with the doctrine of God's sole and supreme lordship over every thought, and faculty, and possession of man. "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." Why? Who enacts it? The answer is, "God." It is a part of your religious obedience to be a loyal citizen. God has bound up together our relation to the "powers that be" in this world with our relation to Himself. He has set us under rulers and in societies as a kind of interior province of His mighty kingdom, but our loyalty as subjects and our duty as citizens are but a part of the one supreme duty which we owe to Him.

R. DUCKWORTH, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 273.

REFERENCES: xx. 25.—M. Wilks, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 344. xx. 34-8.—J. J. Murphy, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 102. xx. 35.—J. H. Evans, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 353. xx. 35, 36.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 49; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. x., p. 125.

Chap. xx., ver. 36.—**"Neither can they die any more."**

THE Mortal and the Immortal.

I. Ours is a dying world; and immortality has no place upon this earth. That which is deathless is beyond these hills. "Neither can they die any more" is the prediction of something future, not the announcement of anything either present

or past. We are still under the reign of death, and this is the hour and power of darkness. The day of the destruction of death and the unlocking of sepulchres is not yet. It will come in due time. Meanwhile, we have to look on death; for our dwelling is in a world of death—a land of graves.

II. If then we would get beyond death's circle and shadow we must look above. Death is here, but life is yonder. The fading is here, the blooming is yonder. Death, which is now a law, an inevitable necessity, shall then be an impossibility. They who are partakers of the first resurrection and of the world to come are made for ever immortal. This is the triumph of life. It is more than resurrection: for it is resurrection with the security that death can never again approach them throughout eternity. H. BONAR, *Short Sermons*, p. 416.

REFERENCES: xx. 36.—I. Taylor, *Saturday Evening*, p. 322. xx. 37.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 142. xx. 37, 38.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,863; T. C. Finlayson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 65; J. Baldwin Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 328; *Ibid.*, vol. xxvi., p. 182.

Chap. xx., ver. 38.—"For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto Him."

CONSIDER some of the consequences of the truth of this text:—

I. As regards the body. In heaven's language—*i.e.* in the real truth of the case—the body never dies. There is that which lives. At least God sees it alive. The relation of the body to the soul, and of the soul to the body, subsists through the interval between death and the resurrection. Can we suppose that the spirit, in the intermediate state, does not affect and desire its own body? St. Paul leads us on to that thought. He did not rest in, he did not like the idea of, unclothed spirit—"Not that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon"—*i.e.* with the old body renovated, and no longer, as now, burdensome. To God, nothing dies: it changes, but it does not die, "For all live unto Him."

II. But as respects the spirit. Surely it cannot be that energies are dormant, that existence is torpid, and all things in abeyance, and life as if it were not life after we die, till the day of Christ. For, then, could it be said of souls in such a state, we "live unto Him"? We say it of the body, indeed, though it be asleep, because of its relations to an animated soul. But would it be true if the soul also slept that long sleep. Are they not rather living in a very ecstasy of being

and of joy, if they live unto Him? And to think of that life of theirs, may it not help us to live indeed an earnest, and a busy, and a holy, and a happy life? To think of them dead, is not it to sadden, to hinder, and to deaden us? But to think of them living, so living, is not it to gladden and animate us?

III. What, then, is death? Who are the dead? They who, living, live separate from their own souls; and, which is the same thing, they whose souls and bodies are both separate from God—they are the dead. That is the distance, and that is the parting. But do not think of those who sleep in Jesus as far off. Their life and our life is

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 5th series, p. 20.

REFERENCES: xx. 38.—I. Taylor, *Saturday Evening*, p. 280; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 232. xx. 41.—T. T. Lynch, *Three Months' Ministry*, p. 265. xx. 46.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 251. xx.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 301. xx.-xxi.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 328. xxi. 1, 2.—R. L. Browne, *Sussex Sermons*, p. 213. xxi. 1-11.—G. Calthrop, *Pulpit Recollections*, p. 192. xxi. 9.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 252.

Chap. xxi., ver. 13.—"And it shall turn to you for a testimony."

THE Testimony of Life.

The power and the will to sacrifice self is, after all, the grandest assurance of immortality. The things most essential to the being are those which we set about proving *after*, and not *before*, we believe. No man's belief in God rests on a demonstration. No man builds a scheme of life on the proof of the doctrine of immortality. A Divine something within moves him to live a life of which immortality is the only possible explanation.

I. The question has been often discussed, why belief in immortality plays so slight a part in the doctrinal system of the Jewish Church. It seems at first sight incredible that a legislator, so far-sighted and profound as Moses, should have overlooked so tremendous a means of influence as the idea of eternal rewards and punishments would afford. The true explanation is, I believe, a very simple one, and lies close at hand. It was because of the entire healthiness of their belief in it that they said so little about it, and made so little of it as an instrument of influence on men. This separation of the two worlds, as if they had different interests, which may possibly oppose or balance each other, is the sign of a by no means healthy spiritual state.

II. But when we are asked to believe that the horizon of sense and of time bounded the vision of these grand old heroes of the

faith, we remind ourselves how they lived, and what they wrought, and ask ourselves how much such deeds, such lives involve. It is sheer idleness to ask us to believe that eternity meant less to these men than it means to us in our easy, luxurious, self-glorifying days. We know there is but one explanation of such lives, such deaths. They "endured as seeing Him who is invisible."

III. "But it shall turn to them for a testimony." The light of their lives shall shine through their forms, and reveal the inner glory in eternity. This is the eternal recompense, revelation—the revelation of the Christlike spirit in a world where to be Christlike is to be glorious and blessed; where the scars of battle are marks of honour, and the martyr's brow is anointed like Christ's with the oil of joy and gladness through eternity.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 124.

REFERENCE: xxi. 13.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 458.

Chap. xxi., ver. 19.—"In your patience possess ye your souls."

OR, as it may rather be termed, "By your endurance ye shall gain possession of your lives, ye shall secure yourselves from perils of bodily harm and death." It is also, "Ye shall save your souls," and bring your spiritual life safely through the coming troubles; though the physical salvation is more prominent in the passage.

I. There was always in the converts of Jerusalem, a strong temptation to relapse into Judaism; and in those disturbed times which preceded the fall, any man with the Jewish blood in his veins, with the traditional Jewish temper, the ancestral beliefs, the intense love for his nation and people, must have been hard beset. Why should he, too, not choose the heroic part; and cast in his lot with the defenders of the sacred walls? Why not with his dying body make a rampart against the on-pressing Romans, rather than slip away in cowardly desertion, like a traitor, leaving the glorious city to perish as it might. All patriotic instincts, all that the Jew most cherished, must have drawn the convert in that direction; it was a sore trial to have to make this choice between the Old Testament and the New. It was by endurance and self-denial that these Jewish Christians succeeded in overcoming the danger besetting them at every turn. They endured to the end; they learnt by patience to get a broader and wiser view of the true position and relation of the faith of their adoption. The sneers of the unconverted Jews,

the sense that they had lost their patriotic standing-ground, the oppression and sword of their Roman masters—these were the bitter draughts which refreshed their souls, and nerved them for independence in a larger sphere of life. By these, they not only saved their souls, but ennobled their views and aims, till they were able to enter fully into the new conditions of the Faith of Christ; and thereby take an active part in the outward movements of a Missionary Church.

II. Age after age have the conditions of the world's advance called men to display something of the same firmness, endurance, and patience. Each change of time has seemed to bring with it the end, and at each successive crisis have been heard the same appeals to heaven, the same despair of earth, the same assurances that the world's end was come. And yet to those who had patience, and could endure, the evil time has always passed away, leaving the face of Heaven once more serene; and men have found themselves living in a fresh air of hope, with expanded vision, and larger powers for good. The true Christian calling, as the Apostle has it, is to "try all things," to "hold fast that which is good," to criticise, to select, to know the evil from the good, and choose aright. That is the real business for which God has sent us into the world and set us in this place, and a sy tem of organised protection for our opinions, be they never so holy, or never so true, is but a mean way of fitting out a young man for the difficulties and dangers of his coming life, when he must take up his staff and make his way through the world. For this our faith must be robust, as well as pure; manly and fearless, as of those who endure as seeing Him that is invisible. It is not enough, to say, "Let us live the devoted, self-denying life, which befits the humble followers of Christ, and leave aside all that distresses or distracts." We have a higher duty than this. The nobler our idea of the Divine nature, the higher we rate our Christian privileges—the better our lives, the more we shall desire to testify of those things before the world of unbelief. If to our souls the revelation of Jesus Christ provides solutions for admitted ills; if it can comfort our aching hearts in sorrow, and stir us to noble acts in danger; if it weds the ideal to the commonplace, and draws man ever from himself, then, surely, we need not be afraid to be left face to face with the materialist or the sceptic. There is in the Gospel a spiritual power which bears the pilgrims safely through the waterfloods; we may tremble and be perplexed, yet we will not fail nor fall. "If God be with me, I will not fear what man can do unto me."

So to us, as to the Jewish Christians to whom the Lord spoke of patience, the darkest crisis will not be fatal, frightful though it may be; but from the wrecks of the past we, too, shall emerge, strong in endurance, possessing our souls, ready for a larger future of faithful works.

G. W. KITCHIN, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, March 1st, 1877

Chap. xxi., ver. 19. (R.V.).—"In your patience ye shall win your souls."

MAKING for Ourselves Souls.

The Revised Translation restores this word of Jesus to it original force. The Lord did not bid His disciples simply to possess their souls in patience. He told them that through endurance they were to win their souls. Souls, then, are for us to win. Literally, the word used by Jesus means, "*Procure* for yourselves souls." Life is to be to us, in some sense, an acquisition of soul. We usually think of human souls as so many ready-made products of nature bestowed on us at birth, so many receptacles for life of different sizes; and we are to fill them up with experience and education as best we can, as bees fill their hives. But Jesus used of the souls of His disciples a word of purchase and acquisition. In some real sense a true life will be an acquisition of soul. Its daily ambition may be—more soul and better. In what ways are we to set about procuring for ourselves souls?

I. The first thing for us to do is the thing which these men had already done to whom Jesus gave this promise that they should win their souls. They counted not the cost; they obeyed when they found themselves commanded by God in Christ. The promise, "Ye shall win your souls," was addressed to men who had surrendered themselves wholly to that which they had seen and knew of God. It was a pledge of soul made to men who had the wills of disciples. The first step in the way of acquiring our souls is the decision of discipleship.

II. We are to acquire soul by living now with all the soul we do have. If we are to win souls from life, we must put our whole souls into life, but the trouble with us is, that we often do not: we live half-hearted, and with a certain reserve, often, of ourselves from our every-day life in the world. But you remember how Jesus insisted that His disciples should serve God and love man with all their souls and with all their strength. The way to gain more soul and better is to live freely and heartily with all the soul we do have. "In your

patience ye shall win your souls." God gives to common people this opportunity of winning on earth souls large enough—good enough to appreciate by and by what heaven is. Patience may be the making of a soul. That regiment of men is held all the morning waiting under fire. They broke camp with enthusiasm enough—to sweep them up to any line of flame. But they are held still through long hours. They might show splendid courage in action, but the orders are to stand. Only to stand still under fire! But that day of endurance is enough to make a veteran of the recruit of yesterday. The discipline of waiting under life's fire makes veteran souls. Through the habit of endurance God trains often His best souls. If you keep up heart in your life of trial, by that patience what a soul for God's kingdom may be won!

N. SMYTH, *The Reality of Faith*, p. 135.

REFERENCES: xxi. 23.—S. Greg, *A Layman's Legacy*, p. 168. xxi. 24.—E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 127. xxi. 25-33.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 472; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 290. xxi. 27.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 31. xxi. 28.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 300; Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vi., p. 479. xxi.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 312; C. Kingsley, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 109; E. Thring, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiv., p. 149.

Chap. xxii., ver. 15.—**"And He said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."**

THE Passover greatly desired.

I. We cannot enter into the Divine intensity of this desire, but it would seem that the longing Christ had to eat this Passover with His disciples before He suffered arose, (1) from the consciousness that, in that hour and in that act He would for ever put an end to shadows, and bring in the substance of our redemption; (2) because that hour was the winding up of the long years in which He had waited for His bitter passion; (3) that last mournful Passover was a solace to the Son of Man. It was sad, but sweet.

II. What a light these words cast on the Blessed Sacrament which He then bequeathed to us, and on the law which binds us to it. For (1) it shows us that the Holy Sacrament is this last Passover continuing still. What was then begun is a perpetual celebration. In heaven and in earth, it is but one act still, one priesthood and one sacrifice. The Church is the upper chamber spread abroad; a sphere above this visible

world, hanging over all the earth. It is in all lands, under all skies, upon the floods and in the mountains, in the wilderness and on trackless shores—wherever two or three are gathered together, there is the upper chamber, and the paschal table, the disciples and the Lord of the true Passover, the Sacrifice and the Priest. (2) This may show us still further that with desire He desires still to eat this sacrament of His love with us, The first moving cause of this Divine desire is, that He may pour forth His blessings of power and grace upon us. (*a*) He desires to apply to us the benefits of His passion. (*b*) He desires to give Himself to be our spiritual food. (*c*) He desires to make us, even now in this life, behold His love. Love pent up withers away; but Divine love cannot be straitened; it is like the light of heaven which pours down in floods upon the earth. Our Redeemer is not only very God but very Man in all the truth of our humanity, and His human affections follow the laws of our perfect manhood. With desire He invites us to Himself, that He may show to our intimate consciousness the personal love which moved Him to give Himself, with full intention, for each several soul.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. iv., p. 248.

CONSIDER some of the reasons why the Saviour desired so earnestly to join in this last Passover before He suffered.

I. One reason was, that the Passover had now reached its end and found its full meaning.

II. Another reason was for the support of His own soul in the approaching struggle.

III. Christ desired to be present at the last Passover, because His friends needed special comfort.

IV. He desired it because it looked forward to all the future of His Church and people. J. KER, *Sermons*, p. 37.

REFERENCES: xxii. 15.—R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 195; J. Keble, *Sermons on Various Occasions*, p. 495. xxii. 17-20.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 359. xxii. 19.—A. P. Peabody, *Ibid.*, p. 111; *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 260; C. Stanford, *Evening of Our Lord's Ministry*, p. 52; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, 2nd series, No. i.; *Sermons for Boys and Girls*, p. 347; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 142. xxii. 19, 20.—Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 106. xxii. 20.—H. P. Liddon, *Thoughts on Present Church Troubles*, p. 1. xxii. 21-3.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 380. xxii. 24-30.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 333; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 102; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 24.

Chap. xxii., ver. 27.—"I am among you as he that serveth."

We find in these words a double reference: (1) To the character, and (2) to the office, of the Son of Man; to His character as the Lowly One, to His office as a servant. For the purpose of bringing both these things before His disciples He makes use of those marvellous words: "I am among you as the serving one." Consider three things in reference to this service: (1) Its history; (2) its nature; (3) the ends and objects which it is intended to meet.

I. Its history. It is not with His birth in Bethlehem that Christ's service begins. His visit to our first father in Paradise was its true commencement. After that we find Him, age after age, visiting the children of men, and always in the character of one ministering to their wants. At His birth His life of service visibly began.

II. Its nature. (1) It is willing service. (2) It is a loving service. (3) It is self-denying service. (4) It is patient, unwearied service. (5) It is free service.

III. Its ends and objects. It is to sinners that this service is rendered; and there is much in this to exhibit the ends which it has in view. We need forgiveness, cleansing, healing, strength, wisdom, faith, protection. He ministers these to us, according to our need. In every scene and place and duty and struggle and trial He will be at our side, as the servant, to minister to us in everything, so that in nothing we may be found lacking.

H. Bonar, *Short Sermons*, p. 70.

References: xxii. 27.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 291; H. P. Liddon, *Advent Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 330; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 319; R. Tuck, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xii., p. 195; S. A. Brooke, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 65; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 109. xxii. 29, 30.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32.

Chap. xxii., vers. 31, 32.—"And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

These words contain a warning, a comforting assurance and a solemn charge. Note:—

I. The warning. We must remember that the word "you" is not used here in the sense of our common language—that is, to express a single person. Our Lord does not say that

Satan had desired to have Peter only, but all the Apostles. The hour was coming, when their faith was to be severely tried, when they were to be sifted as wheat, to see what in them was good corn, and what chaff. In our lives also the words can never be otherwise than true.

II. The comforting assurance. "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." This is spoken of Peter particularly; it is "I have prayed for thee" not, I have prayed for you, but though these words speak of Peter only, yet we have the assurance elsewhere that it is true of us also. Nay, on that very evening when He thus declared that He had prayed for Peter, we know that He prayed for the other Apostles too, and not for them only, but for us also.

III. All are warned of the coming danger; but one is especially prayed for, that being converted himself he might also strengthen his brethren. These words were addressed to Peter, and if we read the first twelve chapters of the Acts, we shall find their fulfilment. There we find him, indeed, strengthening his brethren, passing through all quarters, and by signs and wonders, by the word of wisdom, by fervent boldness and love unfeigned convincing the unbelievers, opening the eyes of the ignorant, baffling the threats of the enemy—enlightening, cheering, and comforting his fellow-Christians. But this also was said, not to Peter only, but to us. In every society, there are those like him to whom it may be said, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." There are, and always must be, some who have more influence than their neighbours. Every advantage which we have over others makes us subject to this charge. If we are older, we should strengthen those that are younger; if we have the ascendency given by strength and activity, by decision of character, or by general ability, or by consideration of whatever sort, then we, being converted, should strengthen our brethren; we are answerable not for our souls only, but also in a certain measure, for those of others.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 114.

REFERENCES: xxii. 31, 32.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 126; vol. x., p. 133; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 352. xxii. 31-4.—J. Oswald Dykes, *Sermons*, p. 263.

Chap. xxii., ver. 32.—"And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

I. IN this world of sin and sorrow, we have our work to do, and the question is—What work, and how do we do it? Let

us take the world of sin, and plainly and practically, with earnest consideration, ask what we can and what we ought to do. On all sides of us we see life blighted and ruined by human passions, which sweep over the earth like flame over a dry heath, and leave it black and scarred behind them. The sorrows of the world are in the sad heritage of its sins—and these bitter fruits of sin have their bitter roots in selfishness. Things are as they are, and this is the world of sin. We may not leave it. We are where God has placed us, and there we must stay until He gives us the signal to fall out of the ranks. How can we make better this ruined world of sin? The answer is a very simple one, but stringent, rigid, and inexorable; that is, we can only begin to do it by personal innocence and by personal holiness. Ah, how many will stumble over this entrance! No man who is not sincere in self-amelioration can ever be a prophet of God. Men who have begun wickedly have indeed, sometimes, like St. Augustine, like Bunyan, like Whitefield, turned over a new leaf and begun a new life; but we do not believe that even these have done as much as they might otherwise have done; even as he builds better who builds upon a foundation than he who builds upon ruins. But this, at any rate, is certain—that no hypocrite—no bad, no insincere, man—can heal, in any appreciable degree, the sinfulness of the world. Not till he is converted can he strengthen his brethren. Alas! even when he is converted he may find that he is maimed, that he has ruined his own transcendent powers of usefulness.

II. About the mere presence and person of good men there hang a charm and a spell of good which make them do good even when they are not consciously thinking of doing good at all. Their very presence does good, as if there were an angel there; and from their mere silence there spreads an influence, a flowing in of higher motives and purer thoughts into the souls of men. So, too, the mere presence of bad men makes us bad when they are not thinking of doing harm. Marguerite asks Faust with surprise how it is she finds herself unable to pray when his friend is by. How many a crime has been consummated solely because of vicious wickedness unconsciously made plastic by stronger wickedness! Among the pure and good the base and impure inspire a shuddering repulsion such as the presence of Judas Iscariot seems to have inspired in the heart of St. John; but among the many who are but the weakly bad the contagion of the stronger bad has an assimilating force. Are we noble enough to enter into the meaning of the sigh of

Jesus, and to share His pure and Divine Passion for the world? If so, we must enter also into the spirit of His life, and the very first condition of doing that is, sincerity—a sincerity which can only be shown in the whole-hearted effort after personal innocence and personal holiness. If we would do as Jesus did we must be His servants. If we would help to heal the acknowledged evils of the world, we must ourselves be free from them. If we would tend the plague-stricken, there must not be the plague-spot in our own hearts. He who would help others must not only show others, but lead the way.

F. W. FARRAR, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 385.

REFERENCES: xxii. 31, 32.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 476. xxii. 32.—A. Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, p. 198; *Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vi., p. 135; H. Crosby, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 308; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 11; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 296. xxii. 33.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 306. xxii. 34.—W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 278. xxii. 35, 36.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. vi., p. 312. xxii. 35-8.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 471.

Chap. xxii., ver. 36.—"He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one."

ST. LUKE alone records this saying. No other like it is to be found in any Gospel. Once, indeed, in commissioning the Twelve, Christ used the startling expression, "I came not to send peace, but a sword;" but there the whole context shows that He speaks not of the purpose, but of the result of His coming; so that even that saying hardly helps or illustrates this, where He Himself gives the command, and is understood by them literally, "He that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one." This parable of the sword says this to us: "In the world you will have conflict. You will want your sword. Better lack a garment than lack a sword."

Marvel not at the vehemence of the words: there are two reasons for it—

I. They contradict flesh and blood. It is painful to be always armed. It makes life a painful effort. What should we think of living in a beleaguered house—of having an enemy, secret or open, within the household? What food would nourish, what rest would refresh, on these conditions? How, then, if life itself, how if this fair world, how if this pleasant converse, this delightful friendship, this seemingly innocent joy, is, to the eye

that reads it truly, one insidious snare, or one perilous battle-field? What is existence worth on such terms? Nature speaks thus in her indolence and self-sparing. Scarce two or three in a generation really rise at Christ's call to sell the garment for a sword. If He spoke one whit less vehemently, not one—not one—in a generation would listen.

II. There is a second reason for this vehemence. Because in this field deception and self-deception are ever busily working, and he who might gird himself for mere difficulty is in danger of relaxing effort under illusion. It is the master art of the devil to persuade us that there is no battle, that all are agreed. It is a mighty responsibility, if Christ be true, for a Christian to be about in this world. In proportion to his intermixture with it, in proportion to his place and his talent and his influence, is his want of the sword. Better, for him at all events, no garment than no sword. For he must fight either against the world or for it. He cannot be neutral. Weaker men may pass through it and escape notice. But he is one of its constituents, for his day one of its makers. Might he but desire to buy of Christ the indispensable sword.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Good Words*, 1870, p. 612; see also *Half Hours in the Temple Church.*

REFERENCES: xxii. 37.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 159. xxii. 39-46.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 70; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 277. xxii. 41, 42.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 228; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 250. xxii. 42.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 200. xxii. 43.—J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 30.

Chap. xxii., ver. 44.—"Being in an agony."

I. THE text expresses a deep mystery, of which we should try to give some account. It is a mystery; for what reason can be assigned for this intensity of suffering? Was the anticipation of that which awaited Him—desertion, ignominy, a death of torture—enough to cause all the agony which He felt? Do we not degrade our conception of the Lord Jesus Christ by admitting even the sufficiency, to say nothing of the truth, of such an explanation? Many an ancient stoic, many a Christian martyr would have met—has met—such a fate with a smile on his face. Shall we place Christ below them in the moral scale? It is, I believe, for the purpose of avoiding this difficulty that theories have been invented, in which some new and mysterious element in the suffering of Christ has been introduced. Thus,

for example, we are told that the bitterness of Christ's suffering in the garden of Gethsemane consisted in this: That "in some mysterious way" he had to endure the wrath of God. Of this theory I have no hesitation in saying that it is distinctly immoral, for it represents God, the Judge of all the earth, as so far from doing right, that He is angry with an innocent being.

II. While we may not presume to dogmatise on the feelings which passed through His mind then, it is a fair subject for inquiry. Is there any unsurmountable difficulty in ascribing the agony in the garden to a feeling that must have passed through His mind. Anticipation of that which, as we know now, and He knew then, awaited Him. Insensibility does, to some extent, the work of fortitude. But fortitude cannot do the work of insensibility. Insensibility may make action easier. Fortitude cannot make suffering less. Pain or sorrow cannot turn a brave man from his course; but unless he is insensible as well as brave, feel them he must. It is to the sensitive, imaginative nature that suffering, felt or anticipated, is most bitter. Such a man needs more fortitude than one less finely organised. But to say that because he is more finely organised he is less brave, is to assume that for which neither reason nor fact give the slightest warrant. That it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to understand fully the connection between the suffering of Christ and the fulfilment of sin is undeniable; but if this connection be once admitted, I cannot see that there is any difficulty in understanding why anticipated suffering should have caused a sharper pang to Him than it would have done to many an ordinary man. It is a mistake to confound this sensitiveness with a deficiency in fortitude, but the conclusion arrived at is quite independent of the relative esteem in which you may choose to hold the stoical and the sensitive nature. You may call the former the higher nature, if you like, but it would not have been suited to the mission of Christ.

J. H. JELLETT, *The Elder Son and Other Sermons*, p. 153.

REFERENCES: xxii. 44.—H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 203; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 493; *Ibid.* vol. xx., No. 1,199: *Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 83; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 82. xxii. 45, 46.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p 46. xxii. 46.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 299. xxii. 46-8.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224. xxii. 47, 48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. ix., No. 494. xxii. 48.—*Ibid.*, *Morning by Morning*, p. 85; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 304; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 81. xxii. 50, 51.—G. Macdonald, *Miracles of Our Lord*, p. 70.

Chap. xxii., ver. 51.—"And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And He touched his ear, and healed him."

I. By one act, in a moment, Christ made Himself the repairer of the breach. The evil which His follower had done was cancelled; and through the kind interposition of a special act, the injured man was none the worse, but rather the better; and the harm, of which a Christian had been the occasion, was neutralised by his Master. Ill would it be for any of us, if there were not that refuge of thought to fall back upon, from all the foolish things and all the wrong things said and done, which we have afterwards so much regretted. It would be tremendous to think of all the trail of harm which we were dragging after us, if there were not a Christ—a Canceller and a Rectifier.

II. There is a great difference between those troubles which come straight from God, and those which pass to us from the hand of man. There are a dignity and sacredness about the one and an almost defilement about the other. But it would be a mistake to infer that any one kind of trial comes more under the remedial power of the Lord Jesus Christ than another. It does not matter where the root and spring of the trouble lie, as soon as they are brought to Him they are all alike. Take it, in all its breadth, whatever the wound be, and whoever was the wounder—equally Christ is the Healer.

III. Malchus, as we have seen, had been one of the foremost against Christ. In his opposition to Christ he got his hurt. Christ cures the hurt which was the consequence of opposition to Himself. The worst hurts we get in life are those which we incur by taking the side against light, against conviction, against truth, *i.e.* against God. We all of us have borne, and perhaps some of us are bearing now, some of those hurts. Our only remedy lies with Him, whom we were, at that moment, in the act of making our enemy, when we got that hurt. And the marvel is, how He heals us; not a word of reproach, not a shadow of retaliation; it is enough we are wounded, and we cannot do without Him—therefore He does it. There is no healer of wounds but the Lord Jesus Christ.

J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 239.

References: xxii. 51.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 143; T. Birkett Dover, *The Ministry of Mercy*, p. 209. xxii. 54-61.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 469.

Chap. xxii., vers. 61, 62.—"**And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice,**" etc.

PETER'S Repentance a Type of True Sorrow. Observe—

I. That Peter's sorrow did not arise from the fact that his guilt was known.

II. It was not simply the suffering of remorse.

III. The Divine power of Peter's sorrow is shown by three facts. (1) It rose from the sense of Christ's love; (2) it was manifested in the conquest of self-trust; (3) it became the element of spiritual strength.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 191.

ALTHOUGH the failings and sins of God's eminent servants are faithfully recorded in Holy Scripture, we can never fail to cherish an affectionate and reverential remembrance of those chosen saints of God. Let us never forget how Jesus Himself valued and loved them, and was cheered and encouraged by their affection, their sympathy and their obedience. The faults and sins of God's people are recorded in Scripture, not that we may love and esteem them less, but that we may honour and love and esteem God more, and that we may be more thoroughly convinced of our own inability to serve and please our God.

I. Peter sinned against Light; against bright and fully revealed Light. The Father Himself had revealed unto him that Christ was the Son of God; and he not only sinned *against* Light, but in the actual *presence* of Light. Jesus was before him while he denied Him. And so do we all sin—against Light and in the presence of Light. The very eyes of Jesus are resting upon us, and the very truth of the words of Jesus is within our hearts, whilst we forget Him and deny Him.

II. Remember how Christ had forewarned Peter, even when He had before Him His own sorrow and coming agony. So wonderful was His faithfulness and His love that He never for a moment forgot the sorrows of His disciples. The Lord looked upon Peter, and that brought back to Peter his individual relationship to Jesus.

III. Peter's weeping was a life-long weeping. Repentance which is born out of love lasts all our life. Repentance which exists chiefly out of fear may end in despondency, or may be banished altogether, as the morning cloud. Then this weeping, although it was bitter, was also sweet. Repentance is not

bitter in the sense of that bitterness which the world's sorrow is, but is full of sweetness. In God's Word we have the blessedness of the poor in spirit, of those that mourn, of those that are weak, of those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, nay, more wonderful than all, we have the blessedness of the pure in heart. And when we repent and sorrow over our sins, it is because the voice of Jesus is heard saying, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." A. SAPHIR, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 673.

REFERENCE: xxii. 61, 62.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vi., p. 278.

Chap. xxii., ver. 62.—"And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

ONLY a Fall.

It is very difficult to define a fall. It has boundaries; you go into it and you come out of it. Some conditions of sin have no boundaries. Therefore, till the issue we cannot absolutely pronounce upon any wrong state and tell it is a fall. It rests with you, so to get up at this minute from any sin that you have ever done, that you shall make it only a fall. "Only a fall?" Yes—a mere parenthesis, a mere exception, to be absorbed back into the eternal grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. Look at the downward steps in Peter which go to make that long fearful slide which we name a fall. Peter, presuming on his position, and elated with his high distinctions, began to compare himself with other people and to prefer himself to them. I do not know whether this habit of comparison was the child of—or gendered—the pride which took possession of Peter's heart. Certain it is that he was proud, and the reason he was proud was that he was dealing with a low level. Whenever you have proud feelings, it is a proof, not that your attainment is great, but that your standard is deficient. "We have left all and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"

II. Peter was reproved. But he was where all caution falls impotent. Without any measurement of himself, without any thought of past monition, he hurried on and ventured into the very midst of scenes which were full of the ordeal which he was least able at that moment, to meet; and at once he was precipitated into the depth of his humiliation. He is as weak as the slenderest reed upon the lake. He, whom we should have called characteristically and fearlessly honest, tells three base lies. His Master is despised, sacrificed to a fear and a blush.

III. How did the restoring mercy work? By the simplest of all simple processes. Peter's eye was still on Christ. There was a fascination in the Saviour to him, even in his wickedness.

There was a relationship between that man and Christ which nothing could ever dissolve; he could not help but look at Christ. And as Peter looked, the face of Jesus turned and looked upon Peter, and the Saviour's and the sinner's eyes met, and that meeting was salvation. It was but a glance, and it took but a moment, but it was the hinge of Peter's destiny for ever and ever. J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons,* 5th series, p. 290.

REFERENCES: xxii.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 324. xxiii. 2.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 216. xxiii. 8, 9.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,645; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 65. xxiii. 8-11.—Parker, *Hidden Springs*, p. 269. xxiii. 9.—W. M. Taylor, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 47. xxiii. 13-16.—W. Hanna, *The Last Days of Our Lord's Passion*, p. 119. xxiii. 15.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 99.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 16.—"I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him."

NOTE:—

I. That the trials and sufferings of Jesus Christ were essential to the perfection of His character as our Great Example. There have been in the world examples of patience and resignation and submission to the will of God, but there have been none like that of Jesus Christ.

II. The sufferings of a Redeemer as a substitute for man have made a wondrous impression upon the human mind. Since the world began, no transaction like it has ever taken place—no expedient like it has ever been found to influence the human heart, or stay the swelling tide of human corruption. The flood swept away a guilty world, and the impression made by that dread manifestation of Divine displeasure was soon forgotten. But the event of Calvary attracted the attention, affected the hearts, and changed the character, of thousands. The impression, moreover, which it makes is of the very character needed. An impression not more distinct of God's readiness to forgive sin than of His displeasure against sin.

III. The Cross of Christ is a demonstration of love, a warrant for confidence, an appeal to everything noble and generous about human nature. I question not that the Redeemer's work took its peculiar form as much to meet the feelings of the human hearts as to meet the requirements of God's justice and truth. Our feelings towards God are naturally those of distrust and opposition, and that simply because we are sinners; and these feelings must be mastered before we can be saved; and

they must be mastered by an unequivocal overwhelming demonstration of love; and we have it in the Cross, for there God is in Christ, reconciling man into Himself. The Redeemer was not compelled to suffer; but because He loved man so much the thickening darkness of the curse only bound him the faster to His work; He saw, He endured, He triumphed under the influence of love to man; and now He not only shows us that we may trust Him, but He addresses His appeal to our hearts.

E. MASON, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 42.

REFERENCE: xxiii. 20-5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 270.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 21.—"**They cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him!**"

THE Cross the expression of man's unbelief. Crucifixion was the death of the outcast only,—the *Gentile* outcast. "Crucify Him," then, meant, "Let Him die the worst of deaths, the Gentile death, the death that is so specially connected with the curse; the death that proclaims Him to be not merely an outcast from Israel, an outcast from Jerusalem, but an outcast from the Gentiles, an outcast from the race."

I. It was thus that man rejected Christ—civilised man, educated man, religious man! It was thus that the natural heart spoke out, and showed the depths of its enmity and atheism—the extent of its desperate *unbelief*. All unbelief is rejection of the Son of God. Whatever be its evasions and subterfuges, and excuses, and fair pretences, this is its essence—rejection of the Christ of God.

II. And why this desperate rejection; this feeling of man towards the Christ? For many reasons; but chiefly for this, that God's religion, of which Christ is the beginning and the ending is so thoroughly opposed to man's religion, or man's ideas of religion, that to accept Jesus of Nazareth would be a total surrender of self, a confession of the utter absence of all goodness, an overturning of every religious idea or principle which the flesh had cherished and rested on. Man's alternative is—the denial of self, or the denial of Christ; the rejection of his own claims to be his own Saviour, or the rejection of the claims of Christ; the crucifixion of the flesh, or the crucifixion of Christ. Allow unbelief to take its own way and, run its course, and it will end in the crucifixion of the Lord of glory. It will prefer self, the flesh, the devil, the worst of criminals to Christ. "Not this man, but Barabbas!"

H. BONAR, *Short Sermons*, p. 157.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 25.—"But he delivered Jesus to their will."

I. WHAT was this will? What was the moving spring of their fierce resolution that Jesus of Nazareth should die? (1) It was their will that this stern censor of their manners and morals should die. This was, perhaps, the first and broadest reason of their hate. They writhed under His vehement denunciation of their sins—the bold hand which rent off the cloak of their sanctity, and revealed the foul sink of corruption that was beneath. (2) They willed that the witness to the truth should die. The Lord belonged to another world which they did not care to enter; a world which troubled their selfish, sensual lives. Men hate the witness of truth when they are bent on transgression. They cannot bear it, they will not. (3) They willed that the teacher of the people, the friend of publicans and sinners, should die. They were a ruling class, almost a caste. And such rulers hate none so bitterly as those who speak loving, quickening, emancipating words to the poor. "The common people heard Him gladly." As society was then constituted in Judæa, that meant that He or the rulers must fall. (4) There was something deeper and more malignant than this. It was their will that their Saviour should die. One cannot shake off the impression, reading the Gospel narrative, that the rulers knew Him. Nicodemus was not without vision of the truth. Others must have shared his ideas. They felt that He had come to save them, and they would not be saved. This was the will of the Jews.

II. But what, meanwhile, was the will of God? St. Peter explains it (Acts ii. 23): "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." How is this? It was God's will as well as their own; as far as the act was concerned, the Father delivered the well-beloved Son into the hands of the Jews. To understand this, we must consider (1) that it was not possible that the God-Man should be holden of death. The Jews willed that He should die, but what He was, what they hated, could not die. (2) Through death the power of Christ, His witness to the truth, His witness against sin, His redemptive work for mankind, became living, nay, all-pervading and almighty realities in the world.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Sunday Afternoon*, p. 159.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 26.—J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 15th series, p. 149; A. Blomfield, *Sermons in Town and Country*, p. 99; Spurgeon,

Morning by Morning, p. 96. xxiii. 27.—*Ibid.*, p. 100. xxiii. 27-31.—*Ibid.*, vol. xxii., No. 1,320. xxiii. 28.—W. Morrison, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 203.

Chap. xxiii., vers. 28-31.—**"But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children," etc.**

Lessons of the Passion.

We have in this passage two lessons before us.

I. The first is the right and wrong view of Christ's Passion: "Weep not over Me, weep for yourselves." These women were indulging the emotion, the sentiment, the luxury of weeping. They wept as all that is human in us does weep at the sight of pain, at the spectacle of sorrow, at the march of death. But their weeping was misapplied. As a merely natural expression of sorrow it was out of place. There was something in that spectacle above, beyond, and beside the mark of pity; there was something in that death which was in danger of being obscured and being lost sight of if it was wept over. If they could not see that death in a higher light than pity, they had better turn their weeping another way; they had better anticipate a terrific future which would claim a monopoly of tears for themselves and for their children. Now these things are our ensamples, they were written for our admonition. The Passion of our Lord is not in itself a thing for tears. He Himself, long centuries ago, went back into the heaven of His holiness and of His glory. To weep over Him, year after year, as these daughters of Jerusalem wept is too much or too little. He needs not, asks not, accepts not our compassion.

II. If these things are done in the green tree, what must happen to the dry? If He who knew no sin thus suffers, how much more the wicked and the sinner? The sufferings of Jesus Christ say to us, See what sin is, by seeing the Sinless suffer for it. If the green tree burned as it burned on Calvary, in misery, in anguish, in a hiding of God's countenance, and a very dying under that cloud—if these things were done in the green tree—how must it be in the dry? How shall he escape the conflagration who is as fuel ripe for it? How shall he escape the everlasting burnings who has here despised the riches of God's goodness, and forbearance, and longsuffering, and treasured up for himself wrath in a day of wrath?

C. J. Vaughan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 225.

References: xxiii. 29.—J. Irons, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*,

vol. xv., p. 29. xxiii. 31.—Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 99; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 370; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 415. xxiii. 33,—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 189; *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 158; *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv. p. 300; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 108; *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 266; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 101; F. W. Robertson, *The Human Race and Other Sermons*, p. 152; F. Temple, *Rugby Sermons*, 1st series, p. 298.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 34.—"Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

I. Jesus prays. It is something to be capable of prayer in acute anguish of body. He prays, not for Himself. That is more. A cry for pity, for relief, for mitigation, for death—a cry for patience, for faith, for grace, for heaven—this might be. But to forget self altogether in suffering, to think of others, to use that breath of life, each gasp of which is torture, in prayer for another life or another soul—this is not the manner of men, but it is the prayer of Christ. Yet once again, to think, even then of some loving and beloved one, some life next our own, and to pray for its welfare, and its salvation—this too might be—might just be. Jesus prays for His enemies, for His murderers, for His crucifiers. He prays, and He inspires the prayer; the first martyr, Stephen, prayed it after Him: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge."

II. Inventive love, it has been written, makes ignorance a plea for mercy. These rude executioners, the direct objects of the intercession, might not the Sufferer have arraigned them for that ignorance which was doing despite to God Himself in the display of every hateful characteristic of the fallen and sinful nature. Evidently the ignorance is no innocence. Else why the prayer, Forgive them? St. Paul's ignorance was no innocence, for he speaks of himself, in the same breath, as needing mercy, and mercy is, by definition, kindness to the sinful.

III. We see in all this the exceeding great love, the self-forgetfulness, of Jesus Christ: His considerateness, stronger than death, yea, prevalent because of death, towards men who pierce Him; His unprovokableness by slight or insult; His far-seeing hope for the unthankful and the evil. He looks to the end, the eventual state, the eternity to be lived through. Let Him see of the travail of His soul, in that one case over which alone you have control—your own. It has been written, "Wander whither thou wilt, thou must come at last to the

place of a skull." Let it be to that Golgotha where Christ gave Himself to be life from the dead.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words from the Cross*, p. 1.

I. THE first thing that strikes me in this passage, is that it is one of our Saviour's dying sayings. His death must ever be the most public event in time—the central fact of history. All the children are sent for—all are called to look and listen while He is dying. Every dying word of His is set down with most exact minuteness, and set down for the purpose of perfect and eternal publication. No preacher like the dying Christ; no pulpit like the Cross; no congregation like that which was and ever is around it; no sermon like the seven sentences used there.

II. Observe, secondly, that this saying is one of seven. What is the deep thought that underlies this mystic seven? Looking intently on the surface, we recognise that, at least, here is the sign of "order, heaven's first law," and have an evidence that the work finished by Jesus on the Cross has a Divinely symmetrical completeness. Looking below the surface, we gradually find that here, as in other Scripture passages, the number seven on any series of words or actions marks that series as conveying some revelation of God to us, which is distinguished even above His other revelations by its great glory and its importance.

III. We are struck with the fact that the first of these seven sayings of Christ curcified is a prayer for His crucifiers. As chance had nothing to do with making the sayings seven, so chance had nothing to do with the place of each in the order of succession. To our mind, this order shows development of a revelation and not mere sequence in time. It shows what so filled the Saviour's heart when He was dying as to make this speech its first overflow.

IV. This prayer of love was effectual. When the Holy Spirit lighted up the meaning of the Cross, brought out its force, showed the crucifiers what they had been doing, made a judgment day in their souls, and pricked them to the heart; then they cried out, and looking to Him whom they had pierced, were forgiven.

C. STANFORD, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 232.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 34.—*Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times,"* vol. vii., p. 86; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 196; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series,

p. 24 ; *Ibid.*, 4th series, p. 28 ; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 247; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 112 ; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 897. xxiii. 35-7.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 206 ; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 160. xxiii. 39.—S. Minton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 198. xxiii. 39-43.—J. C. Ryle, *Church Sermons*, vol. i., p. 57 ; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 193. xxiii. 39-45.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 142 ; *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., p. 236 ; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 333 ; *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 217 ; R. C. Trench, *Studies in the Gospels*, p. 297. xxiii. 40-2.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxii., No. 1881. xxiii. 41.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 31.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 42.—**"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom."**

FAITH's Language. Note:—

I. The circumstances of this prayer. They were surely as unpropitious as any in which a heavy-laden sinner ever sought the Lord. How terribly short is the time he has left to devote to the business of eternity! Then think how hard it must have been to fix his thoughts and raise them upward at such a time. In no case is a death-bed scene the fittest place for serious thoughts and prayer, and his was no ordinary death-bed. Yet even then his mind was clear, and his spirit strong. The urgent demands of his suffering body hindered not the upward aspirings of his soul. Let no one, then, throw on his circumstances the blame of that neglect of his soul's concerns which is all his own. The spirit that is all in earnest will press through all these obstacles.

II. The occasion of the prayer. Not only did hell lie all about him, but close at his side, vexing his soul with impious blasphemies, and almost shrouding from view the blessed Form on which he is striving to fix his eye, in a cloud of contumely and scorn. Yet even these adverse circumstances were turned, through the mighty power of grace, into an instrument of good. He is not satisfied with merely rebuking his companion's blasphemies, he hastens to cast himself at the Saviour's feet whom he blasphemed. This brings us to our third head, viz.—

III. The nature of the prayer itself. We notice (1) its brevity. Such prayers are the soul's swift arrows, glowing sparks thrown off from the burning heat, gleaming for a moment, then vanishing out of sight. (2) Its comprehensiveness. If the words are few, how pregnant and how vast is the sense. (3) It was an act of *worship*, "*Lord*, remember me." It was an act of supplication, and as such, how all embracing!

"Lord, *remember me.*" What needed blessing, what conceivable work and gift of Divine grace is not included in it!

IV. The success of this prayer, How prompt, how immediate was the Saviour's reply to the cry of the penitent. No sooner is the prayer offered than it is answered. While he is yet speaking, the Redeemer hears. He is in haste to meet the returning prodigal, and present him with the blessings of His goodness, the seals of His pardoning love.

I. BURNS, *Select Remains*, p. 59.

Chap. xxiii., vers. 42, 43.

I. We see here an illustration of the Cross in its power of drawing men to itself,

II. We have here the Cross as pointing to and foretelling the kingdom.

III. Here is the Cross as revealing and opening the true Paradise.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, p. 153.

I. IT is no over-wrought or exaggerated statement that the dying thief exhibited all the tokens which can ever be demanded of a genuine conversion. There was confession of sin, there was spirituality of mind, there was anxiety for others, there was the fullest recognition of Christ's power to deliver; and there was a mighty faith which, nothing daunted by all the circumstances of apparent helplessness and defeat, was sufficient to confound and overcome distance, sprang beyond the line of death and shame, and seemed to gaze on the palace and the crown. The thief was perhaps the only individual who believed on Jesus when Jesus died; and certainly it was an amazing thing, that he who was hanging beside Christ should believe, while he who had lain in His bosom had doubted.

II. We may all be aware that what is called deathbed repentance has been identfied with the repentance of this malefactor—that men have encouraged themselves from it, in deferring to the end of life the providing for eternity. So men forget (1) that two thieves were crucified with Christ, and although the one was saved, the other perished. He must be singularly unconcerned about his soul who can be satisfied in pursuing a plan which, on the best calculation, leaves exactly equal the chances of being condemned and of being saved. (2) There is not one amongst us who can possibly, when his deathbed draws nigh, stand morally in the same position as the

thief on the cross. We cannot drive away the baptismal waters from our foreheads; we may make ourselves apostates—we cannot make ourselves heathens. (3) He who of set purpose defers repentance to a deathbed should be able to prove that the thief of set purpose deferred repentance to a deathbed, else the cases are so distinct that there is no excuse for believing that the final penitence of the one renders at all probable the final penitence of the other.

III. The history of the dying thief offers no encouragement to those who would defer repentance, but it does offer encouragement the fullest and the richest, to all who are sincerely desirous of being saved. Who can despair of finding mercy, when he sees a thief transported in a moment, from the Cross to Paradise? One thief, indeed, perished, though within reach of the Saviour, and therefore we are bound to guard against presumption; the other was saved, though in the jaws of destruction, and therefore we are bidden never to despair.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,071.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 42.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 323; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 159; F. O. Morris, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 409. xxiii. 42, 43.—S. Minton, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 233; A. Scott, *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 76; T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 47.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 43.—"**Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.**"

I. THERE was something of prophecy even in the word *to-day*. For crucifixion ended not, commonly, with the twelve hours, or the twenty-four; it was protracted often, in its horrors and its anguish, till the second day, the third, the fourth. There was a sound of mercy in the very *to-day*, promising a speedier end to those sufferings. *In Paradise.* That name of rest and felicity, appropriated in the Greek Bible to the original home of man's innocence, is thus transferred by our Lord Himself to a state or region immediately beyond death, into which He Himself would enter that very day; so soon, therefore, as the warfare was accomplished, and the burden of the flesh laid aside. The *to-day* so powerfully emphasised leaves no doubt whatever upon this interpretation. Like other figures of Holy Scripture, Paradise is capable of more than one application; here to the intermediate, there to the final, home of the blessed dead; here to that presence of Christ which is instant upon dissolution, of which St. Paul says that he has a desire to depart and to be with Christ, elsewhere to that presence of

Christ which waits for resurrection, for the glorious adoption and manifestation of the sons of God.

II. "To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Wheresoever the Christian soul is while the body sleeps in dust, thither journeyed the Lord, brightening our Hades, as He also consecrated the grave. Whatsoever be the unseen home for us, between death and glory, such was it for Him. One mysterious passage seems to tell us that in that intermediate state the Spirit of Christ was not inactive; that the putting to death of the body was the quickening of the soul, and that in some errand of love and power He journeyed in that interval, carrying hope and salvation to some inmates of a less than perfect world. The text is a word of blessed hope for such as are mourning the blessed dead; for such, also, as feel that natural, that inevitable, human shrinking from a journey in the dark into an undiscovered country and an unrealised world. Christ is there in a sense in which He is not here; there are they, and there shalt thou be in thy season, with Him in Paradise.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words from the Cross*, p. 15.

REFERENCES: xxiii 43.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 258; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 3rd series, p. 26. xxiii. 44-6.—J. Wells, *Thursday Penny Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 421. xxiii. 45.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 267.

Chap. xxiii., ver. 46.—**"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."**

THESE words have two aspects, and the first of these is towards our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I. In the one week of the year in which we commemorate His Cross and Passion, it ought to be the foremost thought of each of us how we can honour Him in the appreciation of what He did and suffered in working out our salvation. When we hear Him say at last, "*It is finished*," the warfare is accomplished, the victory won, atonement made, heaven opened for all who believe; when, finally, turning His latest thought of all to God, known, loved, and trusted in, we hear Him cry, amidst all the horror and darkness and anguish, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit;*" we shall feel that here, in the utterance of the mind that was in Christ, we have indeed the rightful Owner of our lives and of our hearts; we shall cry out to Him, with the energy of all that is in us, no longer faithless, but believing, "*My Lord and my God.*"

II. The words before us have an aspect also towards ourselves. We know not the time nor the manner, but the fact of our own

death is the one certain thing for all of us. The wise man, the tolerably sensible man, feels that a necessity is laid upon him of making provision for that end. There is only one thought, one utterance, which can be a satisfactory aid to ourselves, then, and it is here to-night in our view. In this one thing, we must not only learn from, but actually make our own, the Master's word. The very words of Christ Himself have been the dying words of thousands of His saints. "Blessed are they," wrote the great reformer, "who die not only for the Lord as martyrs, not only in the Lord as all believers, but likewise with the Lord, as breathing forth their lives in these words, 'Into Thy hands I commend my spirit.'" These were his last words, and of many of his fellow-reformers and fellow-witnesses in all lands. That they may be ours, in form and substance, they must be the meditation of the life.

C. J. VAUGHAN, *Words from the Cross*, p. 85.

I. OBSERVE that this verse represents to us one of the two main aspects of the Passion of our Lord—one, and one only. There is in a city in France a curiously wrought crucifix, which conveys to the spectator a totally different impression according as he looks at it. On one side it expresses anguish and grief; on the other, profound calm and submission. What is there represented to the sight is represented to the mind in the different speeches from the Cross. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is one; "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," is the other. Both belong to our Saviour's humanity, both are needed to convey to the world the full import of our Saviour's mission.

II. "Father." That is the word which our Saviour adds to the prayer of the Psalmist. In Him He confided, and we with Him may safely confide also. It is this which gives to our resignation the rational understanding and affectionate character which alone befit the religion of reasonable human beings. We are subject, we submit ourselves—not to a blind fate which crushes us, not to an angry demon which needs to be appeased, not to an abstract doctrine which we cannot understand; but to One who rules us, guides us, chastises us for our good.

III. Take the next phrase: "Into Thy hands." This is doubtless a figure of speech, to speak of the hands of God; yet a figure now very expressive. The everlasting arms are beneath and around us. *These* are the hands into which we surrender ourselves: these are the hands at whose call we move.

IV. "I commend." That is, not only in a general sense, not only as giving back my trust, but, "I trust, I make over as a deposit, to Him the gift which He will keep for me." In that great act of self-sacrifice, Christ our Lord of His own free will laid down His life; He was not merely waiting for God's call, He went forth to meet Him.

V. And what is it that we give? It is "my spirit;" not mere life only, not mere soul only, but the best part of our life, the best part of our soul, our spirit. The present life may be dark and stormy. There are many trials of the spirit of man, yet there is one sure remedy, and that is to trust the Father of spirits with the spirits that He has made.

A. P. STANLEY, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 449.

I. THE confidence here expressed by Jesus in reference to the Father was not a confidence at all grounded on His consciousness of the Father's love and favour. There was no appeal made to that. It was grounded on the Infinite perfections of the Father's righteousness and justice, and on the merits of the question. Christ claimed this of the Father. He rested upon the merit of His own work. He had done the work, and now He claimed the first-fruits in the way of recompense.

II. Was this confidence justified? What followed in the case of Christ? We know what became of His spirit, for He said Himself to the thief on the Cross, "To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." It is clear then, at all events, Christ being true, that His spirit went to Paradise. His body rested in peace until the third day. Then the Father commanded the angels to roll away the stone from the door of the sepulchre; the angels rolled it away and the prisoner came forth. All power was given to Him. He was made Head over all things to the Church.

III. Look next at the parallel with regard to our own experience. Christ's confidence is to be ours. The perfect work of Jesus Christ, on which He stood before His Father, is the work on which we stand before our Father. If at this moment we were dying, we have the same reason for saying, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit," as Jesus Christ Himself had. It is not robbery of Christ to say that. Stand upon that truth in life and death, and you will stand upon it in eternity.

C. MOLYNEUX, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, Nos. 395-6.

REFERENCES: xxiii. 46.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 163; G. Macdonald, *Unspoken Sermons*, p. 180; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*,

3rd series, p. 36; *Ibid.*, 4th series, p. 40; T. M. Herbert, *Sketches of Sermons*, p. 207. xxiii. 46-9.—D. Davies, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 342. xxiii. 48.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 860. xxiii. 49.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 211; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 13th series, p. 117. xxiii. 50.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p 459. xxiii. 51.—E. White, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvi., p. 11. xxiii. 55.—J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, pp. 205, 215. xxiii. 56.—G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 258; G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospels*, p. 275; R. S. Candlish, *Scripture Characters and Miscellanies*, p. 75. xxiii.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, p. 343. xxiv. 1-8.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 302. xxiv. 2.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 208.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 5, 6.—"Why seek ye the Living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."

I. The first thought that these words of the angel messenger, and the scene in which we find them, suggest, is this: The dead are the living. Language, which is more accustomed and adapted to express the appearances than the realities of things, leads us astray very much when we use the phrase "the dead" as if it expressed the continuance of the condition into which men pass in the act of dissolution. The dead are the living who have died. Whilst they were dying they lived, and after they were dead they lived more fully. All live unto God. How solemnly sometimes that thought comes up before us, that all those past generations which have stormed across this earth of ours, and then have fallen into still forgetfulness, live yet! Somewhere at this very instant, they now verily are! Death is no state; it is an act. It is not a condition; it is a transition.

II. This text—indeed, the whole incident—may set before us the other consideration: Since they have died, they live a better life than ours. In what particulars is their life now higher than ours? (1) They have close fellowship with Christ. (2) They are separated from the present body of weakness, of dishonour, of corruption. (3) They are withdrawn from all the trouble and toil and care of this present life. (4) They have death behind them, not having that awful figure standing on their horizon waiting for them to come up with it.

III. The better life which the dead are living now leads on to a still fuller life when they get back their glorified bodies. "Body, soul, and spirit"—the old combination which was on earth—is to be the perfect humanity of heaven. The spirits that are perfected, that are living in blessedness, that are dwelling in God, that are sleeping in Christ, at this moment are waiting, stretching out expectant hands of faith and hope;

for that they would not be unclothed, but clothed upon with their house which is from heaven, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

A. MACLAREN, *Sermons preached in Manchester*, 1st series, p. 97.

CHRIST, a Quickening Spirit.

I. Observe how Christ's Resurrection harmonises with the history of His Birth. David had foretold that His soul should not be left in hell (that is, the unseen state) neither should the Holy One of God see corruption. In the angel's announcement of His Birth His incorruptible and immortal nature is implied. Death might overpower, but it could not keep possession—it had no dominion over Him. He was, in the words of the text, "the *Living* among the dead. The grave could not detain Him who had life in Himself. He rose as a man awakes in the morning, when sleep flies from him as a thing of course.

II. Jesus Christ manifested Himself to His disciples in His exalted state, that they might be witnesses to the people; witnesses of those separate truths which man's reason cannot combine, that He had a real human body, that it was partaker in the properties of His Soul, and that it was inhabited by the Eternal Word. They handled Him; they saw Him come and go, when the doors were shut; they felt what they could not see, but could witness even unto death—that He was their Lord and their God: a triple evidence, first, of His Atonement; next, of their own resurrection unto glory; lastly, of His Divine power to conduct them safely to it. Thus manifested, as perfect God and perfect man, in the fulness of His sovereignty, and the immortality of His holiness, He ascended up on high to take possession of His kingdom.

III. As Adam is the author of death to the whole race of men, so is Christ the origin of immortality. Adam spreads poison; Christ diffuses life eternal. Christ communicates life to us, one by one, by means of that holy and incorrupt nature which He assumed for our redemption: how, we know not; though by an unseen, still by a real, communication of Himself. How wonderful a work of grace! Strange it was that Adam should be our death: but stranger still and very gracious, that God Himself should be our life, by means of that human tabernacle which He has taken on Himself.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 139.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 5, 6.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xix., No. 1,106.

C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day*, p. 85; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. viii., p. 63; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 166; A. Maclaren, *Sermons in Union Chapel*, p. 113; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 9th series, p. 74. xxiv. 6.—W. M. Statham, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 273; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 128. xxiv. 8.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. x.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 11.—"Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not."

I. We can hardly conceive that, had the Cross and the sepulchre been the end of the course of Jesus, His followers would have held together many months. That such men should knit up again their ravelled and scattered expectations; that these disciples, being what we know them to have been, should have recovered heart, as the narrative tells us, and as the world's history shows us they did; is simply inconceivable, supposing that nothing more happened after the deposition in the tomb. We cannot imagine them, crushed, disappointed, deceived men, standing up before the victorious enemies of their disgraced Master, and proclaiming Him a Prince and a Saviour. There is but one way of accounting for this change; and that way is, that the Resurrection really took place, as we are told it did.

II. There have been many strange days in this world's history, but there was never a day so strange as this one of the Resurrection, because never one that resembled it in that which had happened. (1) As the loss had been, so was the gain; as the sorrow, so the joy. A new order of things was begun; a new life was sprung up. The harvest which seemed to have been but an heap in the day of desperate sorrow, is become precious seed, for another and an endless sowing. (2) And with joy comes responsibility: "They could not but speak of those things which they had seen and heard." This testimony of witnessed fact became a necessity of their lives, they went about invested with its responsibility. (3) And with joy and responsibility came also strength. In proportion to the greatness of the event, in proportion to the vastness of the change, in proportion to the working of the spirit, was their testimony given with power so that it bore down all opposition. Between Peter disclaiming Jesus, Peter weeping bitterly for his faithlessness, Peter returning from the sepulchre wondering in himself, and Peter standing before the council and proclaiming that there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved—there

needs no link supplied, if this joy gave responsibility, and strength followed; but otherwise I see not how the weakness and the power are to belong to the same; how the same man is to utter in a few short days some of the weakest and basest, and also some of the boldest and grandest, words in this world's history. H. ALFORD, *Eastertide Sermons*, p. 1.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 13-15.—"And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus," etc.

THE Journey to Emmaus.

I. We see in this appearance something very characteristic of our Lord's habits and ways. During His lifetime His disciples and followers were always craving for publicity and display. He was always retiring from too much of that, carrying on His work as quietly as possible. How entirely consonant with His whole habit of life are these appearings after the Resurrection.

II. We may see how easily still, in that risen life, He enters into communication with men, how little difficulty He has in joining any company, or any two or three with whom He wishes to be. Thus He consecrates for us our saddest walks, our hardest roads, our longest journeys.

III. This appearance of Christ is like a message of fraternity and Divine regard, especially to plain, simple, ordinary men—to what we may call common men, who wear no distinction and possess no advantage whatever, over their fellows. For who were these two men? No one knows anything about them. In all probability there was not much to know, except that they were disciples, that they loved Him. Who may despair of a visit? Who shall dare say, "The Lord has forgotten *me*"?

IV. We have an instance here of the attractive power of sorrow to Him. They walked and talked and *were sad;* and *then* He drew near and went with them. He is now in the painless, passionless, glorious life; and yet with the quickness of an immortal instinct, with the certainty belonging to an established affinity, He seeks the society of struggling spirits, He gives His presence to sorrowing souls.

V. This, however, we must observe—that it is not to every kind of trouble and sadness that He grants immediate assuagement. A. RALEIGH, *The Way to the City*, p. 394.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 13-15.—H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1870, p. 324; C. Stanford, *From Calvary to Olivet*, p. 192. xxiv. 13-22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 463. xxiv. 13-32.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 165; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 232, xxiv. 13-35.—

Homiletic Quarterly, vol. xii., p. 210; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 214. xxiv. 15.—A. A. Ramsay, *Christian World Pulpit*; vol. vi., p. 284. xxiv. 16.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xx., No. 1,180, *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 305.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 17.—"And He said unto them, What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?"

THE modern world contains not a few of the disciples of Christ in name, downcast and sad, who are leaving Jerusalem as if on the point of giving Him up; and He, as of old, joins them once and again, in another form, so that their eyes are holden and they do not see Him. He comes to them in His Church, which is in their eyes only a human institution; or in His Scriptures, which seem to them but a human literature; or in His Sacraments, in which they can discern nothing more than mere graceless forms: and yet He has a question to put to them and a word to address to them if they will but listen.

I. There is the sadness of mental perplexity. It is our risen Lord who offers the true solution of all mental perplexities. And that He can speak with authority on such subjects we know, for He has given the world a pledge of His right to speak by first of all dying publicly in the full daylight of history, and then raising Himself from the dead.

II. The sadness of the conscience. Our risen Lord reveals Himself to those who are weighed down by sin as pardoning it and blotting it out. But what is it that gives His Death, His Blood, this power? It is that the worth and merits of His Person are simply incalculable, since He is the everlasting Son of God. And what is the proof of this which He Himself proffered to His disciples and to all the world? It is His Resurrection from the dead.

III. There is the sadness of the soul which arises from the want of an object in life to be grasped by the affections, to be aimed at by the will. To persons who are thus living without an object, Christ our Lord appears, once, it may be, at least, to teach them that there is a something worth living for—the known will of the Eternal God; and He, in His resurrection glory, can speak on this too, with high authority, for He was declared the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

H. P. LIDDON, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 257,

REFERENCES: xxiv. 17.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 257. xxiv. 17-22.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 493. xxiv. 17-29.

—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 264. xxiv. 21.—*Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 235. Parker, *Christian Commonwealth*, vol. vii., p. 39 xxiv. 22.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 252. xxiv. 24.—W. Scott, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 124; E. Lewis, *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., p. 378. xxiv. 25, 26.—J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. ii., p. 488. xxiv. 26.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 157; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 12; *Ibid*, vol. vii., p. 238. xxiv. 27.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 18; T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 198. xxiv. 28, 29.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxviii., No. 1,655; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xvi., p. 297; J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 199.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 29.—"But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them."

THE Evening Prayer of Christ's Friends.

I. First, notice some of the feelings which must have been in the hearts of those who presented this prayer. (1) The first and most natural feeling was grateful interest in a spiritual benefactor. (2) The next feeling was a desire to have such conversation continued. (3) The last feeling we mention in the hearts of these friends of Christ was the presentiment of something more than they had yet seen or heard.

II. Consider some of the circumstances in which this request may be offered by us. (1) It may be said to be suitable to the whole earthly life of every Christian. (2) Another time suitable for presenting this request is in approaching the evening of life. (3) This request is suitable to those who live in an age of the world such as ours. J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 264.

. REFERENCES: xxiv. 29.—J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 4th series, p. 40; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 420; *Outline Sermons to Children*, p. 178.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 30, 31.—"And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight."

CHRIST Meeting with Doubters.

The story of the two disciples going to the village of Emmaus is the one which men in later ages have most connected with their own experiences; the one which has done most to bridge over the chasm between them and those who saw and handled the Word of Life. They have been sure that it was written to tell them that this Word of Life is not far from any one of them; that it is their fault and not His if they do not hear His voice and follow Him.

I. "While they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself drew near and went with them." The Evangelist says nothing to heighten the effect of the meeting; not a word to make us feel that this was a new occurrence in the world's history—an occurrence which would scarcely ever be repeated. And why not? Because, I apprehend, it did not strike St. Luke as a new occurrence, or one which would be rarely repeated. He accepted the coming of this Stranger to these disciples as a sign of that which had been continually taking place, when two men walking near Jerusalem, or walking anywhere else, had communed together and reasoned. "Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I in the midst of them."

II. "He took bread and blessed it," etc. If you ask whether His breaking of bread in that cottage was a sacramental act, I should answer that I conceive no act of Christ can be anything else. Was it not a pledge of His stooping to men, of His union with men, of His dominion over men? But if the question is, whether this breaking of bread was like that to which we are invited, who may communicate in a completed sacrifice, who may draw nigh to God through an ascended High Priest?—I answer, Christ Himself spoke of His departure to the Father as the beginning of all highest knowledge, as the opening of such a converse between earth and heaven as never could be possible whilst He was tarrying with them. It is therefore, I maintain, that we are guilty of strange faithlessness and ingratitude when we estimate our position as worse than that of those who saw Him before the Passion, or in the forty days' after the Resurrection. It must be better and grander. Christ reveals Himself not to one here and there: He is proclaimed as the universal King, as the universal Sacrifice. As such we are permitted to receive Him. As such we are permitted to declare Him to the world. F. D. MAURICE, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 33.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 30, 31.—A. Maclaren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 9; E. Blencowe, *Plain Sermons to a Country Congregation*, p. 229. xxiv. 31.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 681; H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 396.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 32.—**"And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"**

CHRIST stopping at Emmaus. We have here:—

I. A striking illustration of our Lord's method of teaching

—which was, to give more when that already given had been duly received. He did not pretend to open truth after truth, just as though His whole business had been to furnish to the world a certain amount of revelation, whether they would hear or whether they would forbear; but He watched with great attentiveness the reception of truth, and He added or withheld according as that reception did or did not indicate love for truth and a readiness to obey its demands. And the importance to ourselves of observing the course which Christ pursued on earth lies mainly in this. We have no reason to suppose that such course was followed only in the days of His public ministry, but rather that it was universally characteristic of God's spiritual dealings. Let there be a real anxiety for spiritual wisdom, an honest wish to ascertain, in order that you may obey the Divine will; and one lesson shall lead on to another, and you shall always be drawing from Scripture, and yet always feeling yourself to be farther off than ever from exhausting its stores. There is every now and then, with regard to ourselves, a stopping at Emmaus that it may be seen whether you are willing to part with your teacher.

II. A most emphatic warning as to the danger of losing golden opportunities, or of letting slip, through ignorance or procrastination, the means of acquiring great accessions of knowledge and grace. We cannot but think that Christians would escape many of those changes of which they so feelingly complain, and enjoy far more of unbroken fellowship with God, if they were watchful for such moments as those in the streets of Emmaus—moments at which desertion seems likely to succeed to presence, or darkness to light; but which are really moments at which the Redeemer, having vouchsafed some rich manifestation, only waits to be importuned that He may vouchsafe a yet richer. They whom privileges make languid in prayer may justly expect to find their privileges diminished; but they, on the contrary, who pray the more fervently as their privileges increase, will find in every spiritual blessing the germ of a brighter.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,662.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 32.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 281; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 305; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 607; *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 234; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 257; *Ibid.*, *Easter Sermons*, vol. i., p. 256; J. R. Macduff, *Communion Memories*, p. 202. xxiv. 33-5.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 146.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 34.—"**The Lord is risen indeed.**"

I. THE importance of Christ's Resurrection is a thing which we must each learn for ourselves; it will not be felt by our being assured by others that it is important. But few persons of any education reach the age of manhood without having an opportunity to learn it, whether they choose to avail themselves of it, or to neglect it. Be the exciting cause what it may, the effect is almost sure to occur; we commune with our own hearts, and think of life and death, and ask ourselves what will be our condition when sixty years are over; whether, indeed, we shall then have died for ever, or whether we shall but have fallen asleep in Christ, to be awakened by Him when the number of His redeemed is full. It is then that the words of my text assume a very different character to our ears; then it seems no slight, no ordinary, blessing to be assured that the Lord is risen indeed.

II. The fact of our Lord's Resurrection implies two things: (1) That He was actually dead; and (2) that He was alive again after having died. The latter point was the only one which was disputed in former times; it was the original account given of the matter by the Jews, that His disciples came and stole away His body. But it is a remarkable instance, both of the force of truth in the long run, and of the sounder spirit of criticism which prevails in modern times, that this objection is now generally given up. No one who pretends to be a judge of human character can doubt the perfect honesty of the narrative in the two last chapters of St. John's Gospel; and admitting the honesty it is equally impossible to doubt the truth of it—as to the fact of our Lord's showing Himself to His disciples after He had been crucified. But it is pretended now that He did not actually die under His Crucifixion; that the appearances were those of a living man, not of one risen from the dead. But where the death of the sufferer was so peculiarly important to those concerned in it, as in the case of our Lord; where He had Himself appealed to His rising again as the proof that He came from God; and where His enemies trusted to prove by His death that He had not come from Him—it becomes an improbability beyond all calculation, that an event, in itself so extraordinary, should happen in the very case where its occurrence could not fail to be considered as miraculous. Eight-and-forty hours after His burial, He was seen, not only alive, but in perfect strength and vigour, presenting Himself to Mary

Magdalene, in the garden in the morning; to two of His disciples at Emmaus, six miles distant from Jerusalem, in the afternoon; and to His Apostles at Jerusalem in the evening: not as a man saved by miracle from dying of wounds, which must at any rate have left him in a state of the most helpless weakness, but as He was, in truth, the Son of God, who had overcome death, and who retained only so much of His earthly nature as might prove to His Apostles that it was He Himself—Jesus, who had been crucified, Jesus, who was now risen, to live for ever.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 94.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 34.—T. Armitage, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 332; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 86. xxiv. 35.—G. Matheson, *Moments on the Mount*, p. 157; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224. xxiv. 36.—*Thursday Penny Pulpit*, 4th series, p. 265; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 115. xxiv. 36-43.—B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 61; A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 463. xxiv. 38.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 297.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 39.—"Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

THE Resurrection of the Body.

I. We may learn from this text, first, that the Resurrection will be the restoration of the whole man, in spirit and soul and body; a restoration of all in which consists the integrity of our nature and the identity of our person. And this is emphatically the hope of the Gospel. The light of nature could not show this mystery. The heathen reached only to the immortality of the soul, and even that they saw but dimly, and often doubted. It was seen, too, that even the elder Church saw this mystery in broken and uncertain lights. Without doubt, they saw, as it were, the refracted light of the coming mystery; but in some sense their eyes were holden, while they ministered to us greater things than they themselves conceived, for St. Paul declares that life and immortality are brought to *light* through the Gospel.

II. It is plain that, among those that are raised from the dead, there shall be a perfect recognition, and that not limited to the blessed, but, like the Resurrection itself, comprehending the wicked also. It follows, inseparably from the law of personal identity, and the law of individual responsibility, that it should be so.

III. This doctrine throws a great light upon the true doctrine of what the Church is. It is not a form, or piece of mechanism, moulded by the human will, or put together for the uses and expedients of men and nations; but a mystery, partaking of a sacramental character, framed and ordained by God Himself. In a word, the Church is the root of the new creation which shall be raised in its fulness at the last day; it is in part earthly, in part heavenly; there is one body and one spirit. And it is ever putting off its mortal shroud, casting its sere leaves upon the earth, and withdrawing its vitality into its hidden source. The earth is sowing with holy dust, and the world unseen replenishing with the souls of the righteous. Even now already, in the clear foresight of the Everlasting, to whom all things are present in their fulness, the Church is complete in Christ. But to us who see only in part and by broken aspects, and on the outer surface, it is imperfect and to come; yet flowing on, and continually unfolding itself from age to age.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. i., p. 364.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 39.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 224; H. P. Liddon, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 225; *Ibid.*, *Easter Sermons*, vol. i., p. 103; W. Page Roberts, *Liberalism in Religion*, pp. 51, 64.

Chap. xxiv., ver. 40.—"And when He had thus spoken, He shewed them His hands and His feet."

NOTE:—

I. The doubts of the disciples. There were some things respecting their Master which these disciples strangely doubted; and there were other things, which they as strangely, as it seems to us, did not doubt at all. They doubted whether He were risen, as some had reported; but they had no doubt that, if He were risen, all was well with them. They doubted whether those who said that they had seen Him were correct in their statement; but they had no doubt that, if these witnesses were correct in their report, *they* had no further ground for sorrow or doubt or fear. They doubted whether this person, who now stood in the midst of them, was really their old Master, Jesus of Nazareth; but they had no doubt that, if this were really He, they had abundant cause of rejoicing.

II. The Lord's way of meeting the doubts of His disciples. "He showed them His hands and His feet." His object in doing this was not only to convince them that He was no spectre, no shadow; but that He was the very Christ who had

been crucified. The nail-prints were the proof, not only that He had died, but that He had triumphed over death; that, though "crucified through weakness, He lived again by the power of God." Strange as this kind of recognition, this way of fixing the doubted identity, may seem, it was satisfactory. The mother in the story knew her long-lost child by the scar on the shoulder received in infancy; so was the Son of God recognised by the nail-prints and the bruises of the Cross. He who raised Him from the dead, left these scars still visible, these marks of death and weakness, these memorials of the Cross and its nails, in order, by means of them, to speak to us, to give demonstration of His true death and true resurrection, that thereby we might be comforted exceedingly: nay, made like those of whom it is written: "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." H. BONAR, *Short Sermons*, p. 249.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 40.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. v., No. 254; *Ibid.*, *Evening by Evening*, p. 24. xxiv. 41.—*Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 425. xxiv. 44-6.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 582. xxiv. 45.—Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 19.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 46, 47.—He "said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day," etc.

OUR Lord's Last Words.

I. The last command of a friend who has left us is commonly regarded with more than usual interest. Whatever else men forget they remember this. It is connected with a moment sacred in their recollections. The last glimpse of the familiar form receding from their view, the vessel long watched amidst the distant haze—these or similar remembrances are linked to those words. Nay, sometimes they were the last uttered on earth. The words of the dying—oh, how we treasure them; how full they are to us of seeds of action; how deep we lay them in our hearts! And our dear Friend has been taken from us; not the Friend of one family, but of all the families of the earth; the Friend of *man*—He who loved us and gave Himself for us. We have in the Gospels four distinct testimonies that our Lord's parting words were a plain command to His Church to preach the Gospel among all nations, to make disciples of all nations, to preach repentance and remission of sins among all nations, to witness for Him unto the uttermost parts of the earth. This is the last sound of that Voice which spake as never man spake; this the utterance which yet vibrated in the air as He was borne upward, and which still speaks on in

the ear of every one of His faithful followers: "Evangelise the world;" "Rest not till all know Him."

II. And what shall we say of the amount of this world's means which God has put into our hands for aiding such work? Need any good work languish, because England cannot afford to support it? Let our vast schemes, undertaken for comfort or luxury, witness what we can afford to lay out on any object when it pleases us. God has bestowed on us all our wealth. He has placed us for religious exertion foremost among the nations of the earth. He has provided us with instruments whereby we may avail ourselves of these opportunities, and lavished on us abundance of wealth to make those instruments effective. It is clear then that we are, as a Christian nation, deeply responsible for carrying on the evangelisation of the earth. H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vii., p. 291.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 46, 47.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 261. xxiv. 47.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vi., No. 329; *Ibid.*, vol. xxix., No. 1,729; T. T. Lynch, *Sermons for My Curates*, p. 215; R. W. Dale, *The Evangelical Revival*, p. 149. xxiv. 47-53.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 536. xxiv. 49.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 280; J. Guinness Rogers, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 257; A. Mackennal, *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 385; G. Moberly, *Parochial Sermons*, p. 134; J. Vaughan, *Fifty Sermons*, 10th series, p. 15.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 50, 51.—**"And He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them," etc.**

THE Ascension of our Saviour.

I. As we meditate upon the passage before us, taking it in connection with other passages in which the same writer has entered more minutely into detail, there are several attendant circumstances of the Ascension upon which we may profitably dwell. (1) As to the manner of it. In the first place, we must notice that it was visible—palpable to the senses of every beholder. You will see at once the fitness of this public triumph; it is true of the work of the Messiah, as it is true of the system which has been founded upon Messiah's death, that these things were not done in a corner. His Crucifixion, His Burial, His Resurrection, His Ascension, were public. (2) We observe next, in reference to the event, that the place on which it happened is worthy of our notice. He led them out as far as Bethany. We can imagine the feelings of the disciples as they trod the familiar road, for they had often been to Bethany together. The inner signification of Bethany is the House of Sorrow; and it is a beautiful illustration, both of the tenderness and of the completeness of His triumph, that, on his way to His highest

exaltation, He should pass the place of His deepest sorrow, and that thence He should ascend straight to the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (3) Note the act during the performance of which He was lifted up on high: "He lifted up His hands and blessed them." This, indeed, was His daily work. For this He counselled in heaven and visited the earth; and for this He returned to His own glory after He had effectually proved the fulfilment of the design of His humiliation.

II. Consider, next, the purposes of the Ascension. (1) The personal results of the Ascension were the publicity of the scene and the triumph of His entrance into His primal glory. (2) Then there were representative results arising from the ascension of our Saviour. Christ is the federal head, the second great representative Adam. By His exaltation our own race derives surpassing honour. (3) And then there were mediatorial results in connection with the Ascension of the Saviour. "He received gifts for men." That is the purpose for which He has ascended on high. All that He could do on earth He did, and He said, "It is finished." Then He went up, that He might superintend its working, and He sits at the right hand of the Father, that He might make intercession for us.

W. MORLEY PUNSHON, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 168.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 50-3.

THE Ascension.

I. As far as the accompaniments of the Ascension were visible to men, they were the simplest and most unattractive that the case could admit. Even the Birth of the Saviour was far more honoured than His Ascension in supernatural accompaniments. On the Birth of Christ the heavenly host thronged the firmament; and in lofty accents heard by mortal ears, proclaimed the event. Not so upon the Ascension. There was nothing whatever of this angelic gratulation; Christ had trodden the winepress alone, and He ascended to His celestial kingdom alone, as though the attention of the beholders might not be distracted. And when the cloud had hidden Him, and the disciples were even straining their vision to catch another glimpse, two angels appear only to instruct these disciples, and not as attendants upon the ascending Redeemer. If the Saviour had gone away in terrible magnificence, there is many a timid Christian who would have feared that the Mediator in His unapproachable splendour and magnificence might have been forgetful of His followers. But those extended arms, and those parting words—the unbelief must indeed be strong which is proof against these.

II. There is a great mistake in imagining that when God withdraws Himself in His gifts, He must withdraw Himself in anger. It may be much nearer the truth to say that He withdraws Himself in love. It is like the going away of Christ only because it is expedient—a going away, of which it might be said that in departing He left His heart behind. Consider what may have been the attitude of your Heavenly Parent in removing what you have loved, and you may find cause to hope that the text has been true in regard to yourselves. "It came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them."

III. Note the effect wrought on the disciples by the Ascension of Christ—an effect, you observe, not of sorrow, but of joy. In place of being disheartened by the separation, they were mightily encouraged, and "returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God." Shall we grieve that the Visible Presence is withdrawn, and that there is no longer on earth the mighty and mysterious Personage who put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and discomfited through dying the enemies of God and man? Not so! There is no reason for sorrow that He quits the earth on the wings of the wind. We could not detain Him below, we would have Him as our Mediator within the veil. This and this only, can secure to us those spiritual assistances through which we ourselves may climb the firmament.

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 1 519.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 50.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii. p. 307, Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 118. xxiv. 50, 51.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., pp. 167, 169; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Sunday Sermonettes for a Year*, p. 105; W. Bull, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 246; T. Jones, *Ibid.*, vol. xxii., p. 122; J. Vaughan, *Sermons to Children*, 3rd series, p. 36. xxiv. 50-3.—B. F. Westcott, *The Revelation of the Risen Lord*, p. 175; *Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 265; G. Brooks, *Five Hundred Outlines of Sermons*, p. 88; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 358. xxiv. 51.—G. Gilfillan, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 209; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 279; J. Vaughan, *Children's Sermons*, 5th series, p. 26. xxiv. 51, 52.—H. W. Beecher, *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. xix., p. 154. xxiv. 52.—H. M. Butler, *Ibid.*, p. 337; *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 266.

Chap. xxiv., vers. 52, 53.—"And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy," etc.

WARFARE the Condition of Victory.

I. It will be well if we take to ourselves, and learn that great truth which the Apostles shrank from at first, but at length rejoiced in. Christ suffered and entered into joy, So did they,

in their measure, after Him. And, in our measure, so do we. It is written that "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God." At some time or other of the life of everyone there is pain, and sorrow, and trouble. So it is, and the sooner we can look upon it as a law of our Christian condition the better. One generation comes and then another. They issue forth, and succeed like leaves in spring; in all this law is observable. They are tried, and then they triumph; they are humbled, and then are exalted; they overcome the world, and then they sit down on Christ's throne. I suppose it is a long time before any one of us recognises and understands that his own state on earth is, in one shape or other, a state of trial and sorrow; and that, if he has intervals of external peace, this is all gain, and more than he has a right to expect. Let us try to accustom ourselves to this view of the subject. The Church, all elect souls, each in its turn, is called to this necessary work. Once it was the turn of others, and now it is our turn. It is as though all of us were allowed to stand around His throne at once, and He called on first this man, and then that, to take up the chant by himself, each in his turn having to repeat the melody which his brethren have before gone through; or as if it were some trial of strength or of agility, and while the ring of bystanders beheld and applauded we, in succession, one by one, were actors in the pageant. Such is our state—angels are looking on, Christ has gone before—Christ has given us an example that we may follow His steps. Whatever your trouble be, though you be lonely, O Children of a Heavenly Father, be not afraid! quit you like men in your day, and when it is over, Christ will receive you to Himself, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh, from you.

II. Christ is already in that place of peace, which is all in all. He is on the right hand of God. He is hidden in the brightness of the radiance which issues from the everlasting throne. He is in the very abyss of peace, where there is no voice of tumult or distress, but a deep stillness—stillness, that greatest and most awful of all goods which we can fancy; that most perfect of joys, the utter, profound, ineffable tranquillity of the Divine Essence. He has entered into His rest. That is our *home;* here we are but on pilgrimage, and Christ calls us to His many mansions which He has prepared.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 221.

REFERENCES: xxiv. 52, 53.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iii., p. 127. xxiv. 53.—F. Kelly, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 244.

ST. JOHN.

Chap. i., ver. 1.—"In the beginning was the Word."

WHY is it that, as you turn the page from St. Luke to St. John you seem to pass into another climate—nay, I might almost say, into another atmosphere? The answer is at least twofold. It is, first, that there was so much to tell, facts and teachings of so much deeper meaning than those which the first three Evangelists had had to bring before you. It is, secondly, that, in the growth of thought respecting the Christ-life and the Christ-nature, there had now grown up the full demand for the full answers to the numberless questions which St. John—and St. John alone—sets at rest.

I. It is curious to notice how, in each of the three Gospels, Matthew, Luke, and John, it is the genealogy which strikes the key-note; and how the key-note dominates their contents. In St. Matthew, the genealogy carries you up to Abraham, and the whole Gospel exhibits the Jewish Messiah. In St. Luke, the genealogy goes up to Adam, and you have throughout the Gospel the Saviour of mankind the compassionate Brother of the race. In St. John, the genealogy is carried back to all eternity: it tells you of a Divine eternal existence with God—not a separated existence, but with God; and of work done and functions fulfilled in that eternal existence—creation, life, light; and of a certain mysterious contradiction on the part of darkness to the Light. St. John's prologue is no mere collection of theological dogmas stuck on to the beginning of his Gospel; it is rather this—that St. John exhibits the earthly Christ-life, as the prolongation into mundane existence of what had been going on in the unseen from everlasting. This is clearly St. John's idea, and you see it reflected throughout his selection of facts and discourses. The special aspects on which St. John dwells in his picture of the Christ-life, are those which exhibit Him as being still with God as well as with men.

II. Thus it is St. John, who is so careful to tell us why Christ was made flesh and dwelt among us. It is St. John, who is so careful to exhibit the death of the Lord as a voluntary

surrender—pleasing to the Father—freely rendered on His own part, and pleasing because thus freely rendered. Accept St. John's view, accept his picture of the visible Christ-life as the visible half of a duplex whole, and the puzzle vanishes; the Gospel which deals with the deepest mysteries becomes in truth the Gospel of explanation.

A. R. ASHWELL, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, Feb. 10th, 1876.

CHRIST the Eternal Word.

I. "In the beginning was the Word." "In the beginning—viz., of all things; farther back than the mind can conceive. For, form in your mind any image you will, however far back beyond the present state of things, of a definite point and a condition existing, and the beginning is beyond that. The expression is a simple one, but it baffles thought. We have here asserted, not that at some very remote period the world began to be, but that beyond the very remotest period which the mind can conceive, the Word *was*, was existing, not then brought into being, but then having His being and consequently, for such is the expression in which we take refuge when baffled by these things which stretch beyond the range of our ideas, "being from everlasting."

II. This Word, then, thus being in the beginning, is said also by the Evangelist to have been "with God." That is not with, in the sense of together with, or besides; but with in the sense of abiding with, as when we say, "I have it with me," or "He is abiding with us—with God, so as to be in that place where God especially was present, so as to be at home with Him and inseparable from Him. It is thus that the Word was with God as His beloved in whom He was well-pleased.

III. The next and concluding clause of our text now follows by an easy sequence. That which was in the beginning—that which was in the beginning with God and inseparable from Him—*what was it?* Could it be a created being? If so, a certain definite moment must have witnessed its calling into being; and before that moment it was not, and thus could not be in the beginning. With creation necessarily began the incidents and limitations of time. Created being is the channel, so to speak, in which the stream of time flows on. But the Word "was" in the beginning, and is therefore uncreated. Again, the Word was "with God." Could a created being accompany the Almighty in the inhabitation of eternity? Could it be said of the Jealous One, who giveth not His glory to

another, that even the loftiest of His angelic ministers was, or could be, "with Him"—His assessor, His companion, the sharer of His glory, the impress of His substance? We are thus, you see, led on to the next declaration of our text, "the Word was God:" was no created being, no angelic intelligence, but partook of the nature and essence of God, equal with the Father, as indeed the very term itself implies. So that the Father in the beginning was not more, nor the Son less, Divine; but both were co-equal, and co-eternal. The Lord Jesus, in His humiliation, was the same Divine Person as before the worlds began; clothed in the garb of flesh, but not a different person. And if at that time we find Him performing acts of distinct personality, addressing the Father, speaking of the Father, so must it have been setting aside merely the difference made by His humiliation, in the beginning, when He was with God and was God. The fulness of the Father's glory was upon, shone forth from, was expressed by, Him. "All that the Father hath," He says, "is Mine." You cannot exalt, cannot reverence, you cannot adore, the Son of God too much. There is no such thing as exaggerating His Divine majesty and glory. The worship which we owe to the Father, the same precisely we owe to Him. He Himself describes the purpose of His course to be, "that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father."

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 1.

REFERENCES: i. 1.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 1; C. Kingsley, *Village Sermons*, p. 176; *Ibid.*, *Discipline and Other Sermons* p. 212; i. 1-14.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p.3 43; vol. v., p. 31; J. H. Hutchins, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 71. i. 1-15.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 472. i. 1-18.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ii., pp. 49, 103. i. 2.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 294.

Chap. i., ver. 3.—**"All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made."**

CHRIST the Creator.

I. The Church in her creeds has borne unequivocal testimony to Christ as the Creator. When we say that the Son of God made the worlds, we do not speak as of an act of His, independent of and disconnected from the Father: for this, from the nature of the Son of God, is impossible. The creative work of the Son is the carrying out of the creative purpose of the Father, not as by a subordinate agent to whom it is said, "Do this, and he doeth it;" for the Son of God is co-eternal and

co-equal with the Father, and acts in accord with Him as a Divine personal Agent, delighting to do His will, and to carry out His purpose.

II. Now let us come down to the Gospel narrative, and connect this high truth with the Lord's humiliation. We are not enough accustomed to do this. We are apt to forget His glory and His majesty in the meanness of His earthly investiture. To us Christians, who believe in Him as the Creator of all things, it is matter of deep interest to watch every simplest word that falls from Him in allusion to Nature and her processes, to man and his capacities; knowing as we do that such words will be spoken not from the weak and imperfect store of knowledge which man possesses, but from those inexhaustible stores of Divine wisdom which first devised them and brought them into being.

III. Note the references and consequences of this great doctrine relatively to ourselves. "What think ye of Christ?" is the most important question which can be asked of us. "Tell them all things were made by Him." What, then, is the world to us Christians? What but a standing testimony to the power and love of our Redeemer? Wherever I turn is Christ; without Him was nothing made. The cold abstraction known by the name of "natural religion," which never converted a heart nor amended a life, no longer chills my thoughts as I meditate on creation; the religion of nature is to me the religion of grace. All science becomes lighted up by the Redeemer's presence. The Spirit of Truth is no longer the mere right-deeming of men; but the living Spirit of Christ. His mighty and beneficent presence equally watches over all nature, and ought to be discerned by us in it. Creation is but a part of redemption; it is but the stage on which the Redeemer's great love is outwardly manifested.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 18.

REFERENCES: i. 3.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 36. i. 3, 4.—H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 198.

Chap. i., ver. 4.—"**And the life was the light of men.**"

GOD'S Self-revelation through Life.

I. This Scripture opens to us God's living way of making Himself known on earth. The Bible is the record and interpretation of a way of creation and of life which leads from the promise of the beginning on and on, with a purpose never given up, and a goal never lost from sight, and against

all human gravitation downward from its high intent, until it completes its course in that one sinless life through which God shines—the true Light, the Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. God has been present as a living power in man's life, as the educating and redemptive power in Israel, as the grace and truth of life in Jesus Christ who has declared Him. Such is God's real self-revelation; His life in men's life, His life in the Christ for our life. The written Gospel is, indeed, worthy of the God-Man. His spirit is in it. Nevertheless, our faith in the real and original revelation, in the Christ of the Gospels, does not depend upon absolute flawlessness in the reflecting glass. That is a question, in fact, for the critics. Let them examine and scrutinise every point in the whole Bible to their hearts' content. We are not anxious to dispute concerning the composition of the mirrors; we are content to receive the light which, by its own radiance, proclaims its celestial source. In this light of life we can walk, rejoicing as children of the day.

II. This Scripture discloses God's way of illuminating our lives. Christ entering into human life is its light. The Christ from God alone is equal to all human needs. He only touches human nature in all its chords; beats all life's music out; lights up all our history. Christianity alone is the truth sufficient for the life of the whole world. Christ renews man at the centre, and then throughout the whole circumference of his powers and possibilities.

III. Only through lives in real sympathy with God in Christ are we to receive the light of the world. You cannot, by any possibility, know God in Christ simply by argument and much reasoning. Through life to knowledge is the Christian way. Go and follow Jesus in His way of ministry among men, if you would know His Father and your Father. As God has come home to man through the life of Christ, so we are to draw near unto God through the Christian life.

N. SMYTH, *The Reality of Faith*, p. 17.

THE Joy of Living.

I. All lives created of God are happy lives, for His own life, of which they are offspring, is happy, and the children are as the Parent. The "new birth," of which Christ made such frequent and solemn mention, is the waking up of dormant faculties. It is the resurreciton of buried powers. That part of the nature which the Spirit quickens is the highest part. Now, when the soul which was dead is made alive, what follows? Growth,

strength, power. Power, then, begins to come to the man—power like the faculty which has been revived—spiritual power, soul power. The man's life becomes divine in its harmonies. A thousand notes in him sound to one key; discordance has gone out of him, as it goes out of an instrument when it is retuned by a skilful hand. God knows no age, and the life which comes out of Him is for ever youthful. The soul which is urged outward and upward by the germinating pressures of Divine moods never reaches its prime. For the life that we have, through our imitation of Christ, is eternal life; that is, its great central characteristic is everlastingness. The leaf of this growth shall never wither; for there is no frost in all the heavens to smite it. Even as Jesus said, "He that believeth in Me shall never die."

II. The joy of living is found in the pure and proper government of the life. Only that which is clean is sweet. The life of Christ, therefore, or growth into a life like to the life that Christ lived, is growth into joy. Heaven comes as harvests come; because the root-life and the stalk-life were perfect after their kind, and being perfect made the perfect consummation possible. Joy is the fruiting of long and patient waiting. We carry the bloom concealed in the sap of our lives, nor shall we flower out till we get just so tall, and have lived just so long. We carry all our heaven within us, before its expression breaks out of us, as a tree carries all its leaves and blossoms under its bark, until the sun coaxes it to let man see the beauty.

W. H. MURRAY, *The Fruits of the Spirit*, p. 386.

Chap. i., vers. 4, 5.—"In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

I. IN Christ was life, and that life was the *light* of men. We consider these words as marking such a derivation to ourselves of that life, that immortality which was in the Word, as can never be affirmed of the inferior tribes of this creation. Undoubtedly these tribes draw their life from the Word, at whose command it was that earth and sea and air teemed with animated being. But there is all the difference between deriving life from the Word, and having that very life which is in the Word an enlivening, illuminating principle within ourselves. It is this which is asserted of men, and we hail the assertion as a fine testimony to the nature of the human soul. "The life was the light of men"—the light of men, that which enables them to

walk in a wholly different region from that of the beasts that perish, which irradiates, as it were, the universe, so that they can penetrate its wonders and scan its boundaries, whilst all other creatures of the earth are limited to a single and insignificant province. Who shall marvel that man is declared to have been originally formed in the image of God, when it appears that even now he bears within himself a principle which may be characterised as the life of his Creator? The heaven is still hung with its glorious lamps, and reason still burns brightly, and intellect is not quenched, and immortality wears a brilliant colouring, all because the Word, which never had beginning, consented to be born—the Word, which never can end, consented to die.

II. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Man, in whom the lamp is lit up, is a fallen and depraved thing, alienated from God, and with all his moral faculties weakened and perverted. Conscience is a light, the light of the eternal Word, but a light shining in a dark place, where the shadows thicken so fast, and the gloom is so dense, that the rays fail to produce any moral illumination. Men in every age have been guided to a knowledge of their Maker from a survey of His workmanship, and might have learned from the manifestations around them so much of the character of God, as would have preserved them from idolatry. These have fallen into most degraded superstitions, these have abandoned themselves to every kind of unrighteousness, not because left without a revelation,—the universe is witness against this,—but simply because "the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." What, then, remains, seeing how possible it is to continue in darkness in the midst of light, but that we pray earnestly with the Psalmist, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law"?

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,598.

REFERENCES: i. 4.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 245; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 272; W. H. Jackson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 60; *Homilist*, New series, vol. i., p. 61. i. 4-9.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 281.

Chap. i., ver. 5.—"The light shineth in darkness."

IN these few and simple words the great Evangelist describes the agency of Christ in the world. In Him, he tells us, was life; vital power for time and for eternity, able to quicken and invigorate man, and to set aside death. And that life was the light of men. Accordingly, when He appeared here on earth

in our nature, this His enlightening power was signified and displayed at the very outset. The Gentiles came to the brightness of His rising.

I. It is in *darkness* that the light is, and ever has been, shining. Whether it be the world or the Church that we speak of, this is equally true; and it is a truth belonging of necessity to the glorious and lofty nature of Christ's manifestation of Himself. His light wins its way—not by absolute and irresistible power, but by gradual and persuading love. Like Himself, it struggles with the cold-heartedness and contradiction of sinners. It is not the lightning, withering as it flashes; not the conflagration, wasting in its advance; but the quiet light that looks in the night from the far-off hillside, telling of peace and comfort and security; which the traveller may seek, but which he may also avoid. It is contented to overcome the darkness of man's nature by turning it into light; by a sure and blessed transformation, not a mighty and sudden overpowering.

II. Though in darkness, the light still shineth. In Judæa, in Samaria, in Galilee, it was never quenched. Amidst the slow-heartedness and littleness of faith of the disciples it shone with undiminished brightness. Throughout the whole history of the Church it has been shining on. Dark we may be, and even at this day for the most part in obscurity, but we have the light among us. While we have been weak, Christ has been strong; while we have been indolent and fickle, He has never been weary. While we have been darkness, His blessed light has been ever shining against and through and in spite of our darkness. If we were not darkness, if the light had exhausted its power and wholly penetrated us, we might distrust it for the deeper trials which are to come—for the storms which have yet to blow, the floods which have yet to fall; we might fear for the day which shall be revealed, whether we should then be found light in the Lord; but now that we see daily more of our own unworthiness and ignorance and darkness, now that the light is hourly shining onwards toward the perfect day, let us have all confidence in its endurance, and its power and its sufficiency. H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 1.

CHRIST Hidden from the World.

I. Christ, the sinless Son of God, might be living now in the world as our next-door neighbour, and perhaps we not find it out. And this is a thought that should be dwelt on. In the ordinary condition of private life people look very like each

other. And yet, though we have no right to judge others, but must leave this to God, it is very certain that a really holy man, a true saint, though he looks like other men, still has a sort of secret power in him to attract others to him who are like-minded, and to influence all who have anything in them like him. And thus it often becomes a test whether we are like-minded with the saints of God, whether they have influence over us. Alas! too often we shall find that we were close to them for a long time, had means of knowing them, and knew them not; and that is a heavy condemnation on us, indeed. Now this was singularly exemplified in our Saviour's history, by how much He was so very holy. The holier a man is, the less he is understood by men of the world. All who have any spark of living faith will understand man in a measure, and the holier he is, they will, for the most part, be attracted the more; but those who serve the world will be blind to him, or scorn and dislike him, the holier he is.

II. We are very apt to wish we had been born in the days of Christ, and in this way we excuse our misconduct when conscience reproaches us. We say that had we had the advantage of being with Christ, we should have had stronger motives, stronger restraints against sin. I answer, that so far from our sinful habits being reformed by the presence of Christ, the chance is, that those same habits would have hindered us from recognising Him. Observe what a fearful light this casts upon our prospects in the next world. Sinners would walk close to the throne of God; they would stupidly gaze at it; they would touch it; they would meddle with the holiest things; they would go on intruding and prying, not meaning anything wrong by it, but with a sort of brute curiosity, till the avenging lightnings destroyed them,—all because they have no senses to guide them in the matter.

III. Christ is still on earth. He is a hidden Saviour, and may be approached (unless we are careful) without due reverence and fear. He is here in His Church, in His poor, in His ordinances. Let us pray Him ever to enlighten the eyes of our understanding, that we may belong to the heavenly host, not to this world. As the carnal-minded would not perceive Him, even in heaven, so the spiritual heart may approach Him, possess Him, see Him, even upon earth.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, 4th series, p. 239.

REFERENCES: i. 5.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xiii., p. 298. i. 6.—

P. J. Turquand, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 173. i. 8. —*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 243. i. 9.—*Ibid.*, p. 107; *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 74; H. W. Price, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 347; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 268; G. Huntington, *Sermons for Holy Seasons*, p. 141; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 309; *Ibid.*, vol. xiv., pp. 158, 257. i. 9-12.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 298. i. 10, 11.—W. M. Statham, *Ibid.*, vol. iii., p. 232. i. 10-12.—*Homilist*, vol. i., p. 209.

Chap. i., ver. 11.—**"He came unto His own and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the Sons of God, even to them that believe on His Name."**

Jewish Interpretation of Prophecy.

I. To the Jew, the argument from Messianic prophecy should be irresistible for these two reasons: (i.) That, book by book, prophecy by prophecy, verse by verse, his greatest and oldest rabbis, his Targums, his Talmud, his Midrashim, his mediæval commentaries, regarded as Messianic the very same passages, the very same Psalms, the very same chapters of Isaiah, as we do; (ii.) that, since their rejection of Jesus, the greatest Jewish teachers, in refusing to apply these prophecies to Him, have been reduced to utter confusedness, amounting often to absolute apostacy from the faith of their fathers.

II. The difference between us and the Jews is not only that we say "The Christ has come," and that they say "The Messiah will come,"—they differ from us fundamentally as to the idea and personality of the Messiah. On two points they take their stand: they will not admit a Suffering, they will not admit a Divine, Messiah. Here, then, we join close issue. (1) A Suffering Messiah! We appeal at once to the Scriptures, both theirs and ours. On their own principles of interpretation, both ancient and modern, we ask who was the rejected Corner-Stone; the Stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel; He against whom the heathen raged; He whose hands and feet they pierced; He for whose price they weighed thirty pieces of silver; the smitten Shepherd whose sheep were scattered; He who was wounded for our transgressions—the bruised, insulted, suffering Servant of the Lord, who poured out His own soul unto death? Of whom speaketh the prophet this? If the rabbis of to-day want to take their stand against a suffering Christ, they must commit many and many a passage, not only of their prophets, but also of their Talmud and their greatest rabbis to the winds or to the flames. (2) Then on that second point of such infinite importance, the Divinity of the Messiah, the argument is cumulative and far-reaching, both in theory

and in history. We make, with no less confidence, our two-fold appeal, first to the Scriptures, next to their own highest authorities. We appeal to Psalms ii., xlv., cii., and cxl.; to the Child in Isaiah whose prophetic name was Immanuel —God with us; to Him who was called the Mighty God; to the Man whom Jeremiah calls Jehovah Tsidkenu—the Lord our Righteousness; to Him who in Zechariah is the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts; to Him who should come in the clouds of heaven. We appeal further to the titles given to the Messiah Himself, again and again in the Midrashim; to the acknowledgments by the Talmud—as all proving that the Jews themselves were inevitably driven by their own Scriptures to believe in a more than human Mediator, and to the admission that He, of whom all their prophets prophesied, was more than David, more than Moses, more than Adam, more than man; that He was the Prince of the Presence who existed before the worlds, whose reign is to be eternal, and who should never die. But beyond all these considerations of literature and exegesis, we appeal to the sacred eternal instincts of humanity. The world needs for its Lord and Redeemer at once a Suffering man and a Divine man. Hercules, from the hour when he strangled serpents in his cradle to the hour he died on the Œtan pyre, was a suffering hero. The Buddha, from the moment that he recognised the awful reality of death and anguish, was a suffering prince. All the heroes, all the reformers, all the saints, have been suffering men. A king who had not suffered could not rule. Yes, and the world needs a Divine man. If Jesus were not the Son of God, were not the Lord from heaven, we should love, we should honour, Him; but He could be no Redeemer, no Intercessor. It is because Christ is God that "there crowns Him the topmost, ineffablest, uttermost crown."

F. W. FARRAR, *Oxford Review and Journal*, Feb. 15th, 1883.

REFERENCES: i. 11.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii., No. 1,055; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 47. i. 11-13.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxi., No. 1,212. i. 12.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 229; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 669; vol. xxx., No. 1,757; *Ibid.*, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 39. i. 12, 13. —S. Martin, *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 295; H. W. Beecher, *Ibid.*, vol. xxiv., p. 57. i. 12-14.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 417. i. 13.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xv., p. 168.

Chap. i., ver. 14 (with Rev. vii. 15 and xxi. 3).—"**The Word dwelt among us.**'

THE word rendered "dwelt" in these three passages is a peculiar one. It is only found in the New Testament—in this Gospel,

and in the Book of the Revelation. The word literally means "to dwell in a tent"—or, if we may use such a word, "to tabernacle;" and there is, no doubt a reference to the Tabernacle in which the Divine Presence abode in the wilderness and in the land of Israel before the erection of the Temple. In all three passages, then, we may see allusion to that early symbolical dwelling of God with man.

I. Think, first, of the Tabernacle for earth. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt, as in a tent, among us. St. John would have us think that, in that lowly humanity, with its curtains and its coverings of flesh, there lay shrined in the inmost place the brightness of the light of the manifest glory of God. The manifestation of God in Christ is unique, as becomes Him who partakes of the nature of that God of whom He is the representative and the revealer. Like the Tabernacle, Christ is the dwelling-place of God, the place of revelation, the place of sacrifice, and the meeting-place of God and man.

II. We have the Tabernacle for the heavens. "He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His Tabernacle above them," as the word might be rendered. That is to say, He Himself shall build and be the tent in which they dwell; He Himself shall dwell with them in it; He Himself, in closer union than can be conceived of here, shall keep them company during that feast.

III. Look at that final vision which we have in these texts, which we may call the Tabernacle for the renewed earth. "Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men, and He will tabernacle with them." The climax and the goal of all the Divine working, and the long processes of God's love for, and discipline of, the world are to be this, that He and men shall abide together in unity and concord. That is God's wish from the beginning. And at the close of all things, when the vision of this final chapter shall be fulfilled, God will say, settling Himself in the midst of a redeemed humanity, "Lo! here will I dwell; for I have desired it. This is My rest for ever." He will tabernacle with men, and they with Him.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Nov. 26th, 1885.

I. "THE Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." This is St. John's declaration. He does not invent a great many arguments to prove it; he simply says "so it was." This poor fisherman, who was once upon a time sitting in his father's ship on the Lake of Galilee, mending his nets; this man who

was infinitely humbler and less self-conceited now than he was then; says out boldly and without hesitation, "This everlasting Word, in whom was life and whose life was the light of men—this Word, who was with God and was God—was made flesh and dwelt among us." And he adds, "We beheld His glory—the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father." We are sure that in this poor man, thus entering into our feelings and circumstances, we beheld the living God. Not some unseen power, some angel or Divine creature who might have been sent down on a message of mercy to one little corner of the earth, or to us poor fishermen of Galilee; it is not such a being whom we saw hidden under this human form: we declare that we saw the glory of the Father, of Him who made heaven and earth and the sea, of Him who has been and is and is to be.

II. That a meek, humble man, who believed that nothing was so horrible as to trifle with God's Name, should have spoken such words as these, so boldly and yet so calmly, with such a certainty that they were true, and that he could live and act upon them, this is wonderful. But yet, this might have been, and the world might have gone on as if no such sounds had ever been proclaimed in it. What is the case actually? These incredible words have been believed. The question was, Who is the Ruler of the world? The Apostles said, "This Jesus of Nazareth is its Ruler." Their word prevailed. The masters of the earth confessed that they were right, Here in England, at the other end of the world, the news was heard and received. Then the day which said, "The Word has been made flesh, and has dwelt among us," became the Queen Day of the year. All the joy of the year was felt to be stored up in it. Every man, woman, and child has a right to be merry upon it. This is the festival which makes us know, indeed, that we are members of one body: it binds together the life of Christ on earth with His life in heaven; it assures us that Christmas Day belongs not to time but to eternity.

F. D. MAURICE, *Christmas Day and Other Sermons*, p. 1.

THE Incarnation.

The Word was from the beginning the only-begotten Son of God. Before all worlds were created, while as yet time was not, He was in existence, in the bosom of the Eternal Father, God from God, and Light from Light, supremely blessed in knowing and being known of Him, and receiving all Divine perfections from Him, yet ever true with Him who begat Him. The

Son of God became the Son of Man: mortal, but not a sinner; heir of our infirmities, not of our guiltiness; the offspring of our old race, yet the beginning of the new creation of God.

I. God was in the Prophets, but not as He was in Christ. In like manner the Holy Ghost came on the Apostles at Pentecost and at other times; and so, again, the Jewish Temple was in one sense inhabited by the Presence of God, which came down upon it at Solomon's prayer. This was a type of our Lord's Manhood dwelt in by the Word of God as a Temple; still, with this essential difference—that the Jewish Temple was perishable; and again, the Divine Presence might recede from it. But even when Christ's body was dead the Divine Nature was one with it; in like manner it was one with His soul in Paradise. Soul and body were really one with the Eternal Word—not one in name only—one never to be divided.

Again, the Gospel teaches us another mode in which man may be said to be united with Almighty God. It is the peculiar blessedness of the Christian, as St. Peter tells us, to be a partaker of the Divine Nature. But still, inexpressible as is this gift of Divine mercy, it were blasphemy not to say that the indwelling of the Father in the Son is infinitely above this, being quite different in kind; for He is not merely of a Divine Nature, Divine by participation of holiness and perfection, but Life and holiness itself, such as the Father is—the Co-eternal Son incarnate, God clothed with our nature, the Word made flesh.

III. And lastly, we read in the patriarchal history of various appearances of angels so remarkable that we can scarcely hesitate to suppose them to be gracious visions of the Eternal Son. Whether or no the temporary outward form which the Eternal had assumed was really an angel, or but an appearance existing only for the immediate purpose, still, anyhow, we could not with propriety say that our Lord took upon Him the nature of angels.

IV. Great is our Lord and great is His power, Jesus the Son of God, Son of Man. He raised human nature, for Man has redeemed us. Man is set above all creatures, as one with the Creator. Man shall judge man at the last day. So honoured is this earth that no stranger shall judge us. But He, our Fellow, who will sustain our interests, and has full sympathy in all our imperfections; He who has given us to share His own spiritual nature; He from whom we have drawn the life's blood of our souls,—He, our Brother, will decide upon His brethren.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 26.

CHRIST the Healing of Mankind.

According to the revelation made to us of the character and kingdom of God, and of the nature and conditions of man, there appears no other way by which we could be saved but by the manifestation of God in the flesh.

I. For, although it is most true that God might, in His almighty power, destroy the sinful race of mankind, and create another all holy in its stead; or separate the taint of sin and the power of death from our nature, and abolish them altogether; yet, we must not forget that God is not power alone, but Holiness, Wisdom, and Justice. There are deeper necessities in the perfections of the Divine mind and the laws of the spiritual world, which are the expressions of these perfections, than we can penetrate. As man, who has fallen under the power of sin and death, is a moral and responsible creature; and as his fall from God was through the misdirected energies of his moral powers; so the restoration of man, it would seem, can only be effected through the same means and under the same conditions. And therefore it may be that the immutable justice of God's kingdom demands no less than the atonement of a Person.

II. Again, sin and death had power in and over the personal nature of mankind. It was from this we had to be redeemed. And for this cause the Person who should undertake the salvation of mankind must assume to Himself our humanity—that is, the very nature which He was to heal and to save—and put Himself into personal relation to us.

III. As the burden of our humanity is too great for any of us to bear without falling, no created and finite being, either man or angel, could so assume it as to raise it from its fall, restore its imperfections, and sustain it in strength and mastery over the powers of sin. Our humanity needed to be hallowed and strengthened: if fleshly, to be again made spiritual; if mortal, to be raised above the power of death; if outcast from God, to be knitted to Him again. So closely, indeed, are we knit to Him, that St. Peter does not fear to say that we are made partakers of the Divine Nature. Therefore He must needs by Himself purge our sins. None but He that in the beginning said, "Let us make man in Our Image," could restore again to man the Image of God.

H. E. MANNING, *Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 1.

THE Holy Scriptures only can answer the question, Who was Jesus? They tell us—

I. That He is God. (1) The peculiar name of Deity is given

to Jesus. (2) Works which belong to God alone are declared to be performed by Jesus. (3) In the representations of Scripture, attributes which can only belong to God are ascribed to Jesus. (4) Honour and worship, equal to the honour and worship of, God are claimed for Jesus. (5) Jesus is distinctly affirmed to be God.

II. That He is Man. (1) Jesus Christ calls Himself, and was called, the Son of Man. (2) The records of His life prove Him to have been really Man. (3) God the Father acted toward Jesus as a Man; and Jesus recognised this fact.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, p. 1.

REFERENCES: i. 14.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 338; *Ibid.*, vol. iv., p. 170; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 340; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 15; H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide Sermons*, p. 123; A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 306; S. A. Brooke, *Christ in Modern Life*, pp. 63, 75; W. Braden, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 385; A. F. Joscelyne, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii, p. 182; J. F. Haynes, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 198; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 22; *Spurgeon's Sermons*, vol. vii., No. 414; *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., No. 1862. i. 15.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 38.

Chap. i., ver. 16.—"And of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace."

FROM this passage some lessons of great importance come to us. As—

I. That we should not try to live in the past, or by means of the past. As distinct from the present, we should not try to get a living, present nourishment out of states and frames and feelings, all dead and gone. You would not go roaming the woods on a bright summer day to gather the withered leaves of last autumn. Let them be. Let them sink into the soil, and resolve themselves back to dust. Trust Nature to get all the good out of them that is in them now, and to send it up and put it forth once more in leaf or flower or corn. If you want leaves, look at the summer trees; how they wave in the light, and quiver, and gleam—millions of them! If you had all the leaves that were green last year, you could not out of them all make one green leaf to-day. So, if you had your old states at command, if you could find them and go into them, they would not be at all what you think them. They would not fit you now, and you would not be satisfied with them. Is there not the living grace of the living day?—a living Saviour, and a living quickening Spirit, to meet your living soul?

II. That, as Christian men, Christian communities, we ought

to be much afraid of stagnation, of settling on our lees, hiding our Lord's money, sinking into a base contentment with what comes by the least effort, instead of still endeavouring after all that is attainable of higher and better. We should be afraid if we have not always something new on hand. The reason some men die spiritually, or sink into a slumberous, bedridden state, that leaves them as useless to the world as if they were actually dead, is, that they do not devise and execute new things.

III. There are those who have never had grace at all in the true, full sense. You have only had sin. You can exchange it for grace. And then—farewell, sin! For grace shall "reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord."

A. RALEIGH, *The Little Sanctuary*, p. 85.

NOTICE :—

I. The one ever full Source. The whole infinite majesty and inexhaustible resources of the Divine Nature were incorporated and insphered in that Incarnate Word from whom all men may draw. There are involved in that thought two ideas. One is, the unmistakable assertion of the whole fulness of the Divine Nature as being in the Incarnate Word; and the other is, that the whole fulness of the Divine Nature dwells in the Incarnate Word in order that men may get at it.

II. Consider, again, the many receivers from the one Source. "Of His fulness have all we received." The blessing that we receive may be stated in many different ways. You may say we get pardon, purity, hope, joy, the prospect of heaven, power for service; all these—and a hundred more designations by which we might call the one gift—all these are but the consequence of our having got the Christ within our hearts. He is like His own miracle: the thousands are gathered on the grass—they do all eat and are filled. As their necessities required the bread was multiplied, and at the last there was more left than there had seemed to be at the beginning. So, "of His fulness have all we received," and after a universe has drawn from it, for an eternity, the fulness is not turned into scantiness or emptiness.

III. Notice the continuous flow from the inexhaustible Source. "Grace for grace." The word "for" is a little singular; of course, it means *instead of, in exchange for*, and the Evangelist's idea seems to be that, as one supply of grace is given and used, it is, as it were, given back to the Bestower, who substitutes for it a fresh and unused vessel, filled with

new grace. He might have said grace *upon* grace, one supply being piled upon another. But his notion is, rather, one supply given in substitution for the other—"new lamps for old ones."

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Dec. 10th, 1885.

I. THE doctrines of Scripture concerning the Person of Jesus Christ reveal His fulness.

II. The poetry and metaphors employed by the sacred writers to describe Jesus Christ all exhibit His fulness.

III. The characteristics which His first followers most appreciated were His truth and grace, and these were manifested in fulness.

IV. The experience of all His disciples confirms the observation of His first followers.

S. MARTIN, *Westminster Chapel Pulpit*, 3rd series, p. 21.

REFERENCES: i. 16.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 257; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 282; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 27; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 858; vol. vii., No. 415; vol. xx., No. 1,169.

Chap. i. ver. 17.—"The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

I. WE have here the special glory of the contents of the Gospel, heightened by the contrast with law. Law has no tenderness, no pity, no feeling. Tables of stone and a pen of iron are its fitting vehicles. Flashing lightnings and rolling thunders symbolise the fierce light which it casts upon men's duty, and the terrors of its retribution. Inflexible and with no compassion, it tells us what we ought to be, but it does not tell us how to be it. And this is the opposite of all that comes to us in the Gospel. Law has no heart; the meaning of the Gospel is the unveiling of the heart of God. Law condemns; grace is love that bends down to an evildoer, and deals not on the footing of strict retribution with the infirmities and the sins of us poor weaklings. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

II. Look at the other contrast that is here, between giving and coming. What do we mean when we talk about a law being given? We simply mean that it is promulgated either in oral or in written words. It is, after all, no more than so many words. It is a verbal communication at the best. But grace and truth "came to be." They are realities; they are not words. They are not communicated by sentences; they

are actual existences, and they spring into being—as far as man's historical possession and experience of them are concerned—they spring into being in Jesûs Christ, and through Him they belong to us all.

III. Look at the contrast that is drawn here between the persons of the founders. Moses was but a medium. His personality had nothing to do with his message. You may take away Moses, and the law stands all the same. But Christ is so interwoven with Christ's message that you cannot rend the two apart. You cannot have the figure of Christ melt away, and the gift that Christ brought remain. If you put away Christ from Christianity, it collapses into dust and nothingness.

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, Dec. 17th, 1889.

REFERENCES: i. 17.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,862: *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 558.

Chap. i., ver. 18.—"He hath declared Him."

WHAT the God-Man reveals of God and man.

The Man Christ Jesus came expressly to show us the Father. That is, He came to teach us that God is our Father, that whatever we see or can imagine of pure parental love holds good of Him. Now we have known parents who would suffer anything, make any sacrifice, endure any pain for the welfare of their children, who would correct their faults with an untiring patience, who would confront the most shameless ingratitude with a constant and forgiving love, who would even die to save them from harm. And this, said Christ, is what God is, and is like. He is our Father—your Father and Mine—His love is stronger than death and without a bound. Sin cannot alienate it; hatred cannot alienate it. And here is the proof. He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father. And while you are yet sinners, yet enemies, I lay down My life for you. Thus God, My Father and yours, reveals and commends His love for you.

II. But again. He who reveals God to us also reveals *man*, and God's will concerning man. He calls Himself "the Son of Man," and that, according to the Hebrew usage of speech, means that He calls Himself "the Man"—the real, the perfect Man. Man as God conceived, and will yet make him to be. We may be, we are to become, such men as He was. That is precisely God's intention concerning us. The world is to be redeemed, humanity is to be transfigured—so at least Christ the Interpreter of the Divine Will affirms; while in His own Person

He shows us what that redemption and transfiguration involve. According to Him, the end which God has set before Him, and to which His Providence is conducting the story of time, is a regenerated race dwelling in a renovated world.

III. But what most of all gives these revelations power over us, more even than their very reasonableness, is the fact that Christ Jesus does not make them in words only, or in looks, but in Himself, in His own Person, character, life. He is not simply One who speaks of life, or One who teaches us how to live. He *is* our life—the Life indeed; for it is only as we become one with Him, who is one with God, that we truly live at all.

S. Cox, *Sunday Magazine*, 1886, p. 658.

References: i. 18.—W. F. Moulton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 349; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 338; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. ix., p. 385; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. x., p. 216; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. x., p. 86; J. Caird, *Sermons*, pp. 101, 121; J. H. Thom, *Laws of Heaven*, vol. ii., p. 361.

Chap. i., vers. 19-39.—**"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask Him, Who art Thou?" etc.**

The Ministry of John the Baptist. From the ministry of John the Baptist we may learn—

I. That when Jesus is about to visit a community in His saving power, His coming is generally preceded by loud calls to repentance. It was the special mission of the Baptist to unfold the majesty of the Divine law, and to call men up to its unerring standard. In some form or other John the Baptist comes always to fore-herald Christ.

II. That when Jesus comes to a place in saving power, His presence is recognised by the descent of the Holy Ghost. John knew that Jesus was the coming Deliverer when he saw the Holy Ghost like a dove coming down upon Him and remaining with Him. Nor was this all: the Saviour Himself was—so far, at least, as His human nature was concerned—prepared for the ministry of service and of sacrifice by the reception of the Spirit.

III. That they who would experience Christ's saving power must accept Him as a sacrifice for sin. When John saw Jesus he said: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," and as he was not only a Jew brought up under the Mosaic law, but a priest, or at least the son of a priest who officiated at the altar, this language in his lips could have but

one meaning. It indicated that Jesus Christ was to be the great antetype of the lamb of sacrifice, and that what was only figurative in the case of the animal was real and true in his offering of Himself for human sin.

IV. Wherever Christ is present in His saving power, there will be a disposition among men to merge themselves in Him. John was quite willing to be put into the shade by Jesus. Nay, that is far from a right way of expressing it. His one desire was to give prominence to Christ, and to point Him out to others. And in this respect he was like minded with the Christian Apostles, for Paul's ambition was that Christ should be magnified, no matter what became of him.

W. M. TAYLOR, *Peter the Apostle*. p. 7.

REFERENCES: i. 19, 20.—R. Duckworth, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 147. i. 19, 28.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 473; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iii., p. 298.

Chap. i., ver. 23.—"He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord."

I. I do not think we often question respecting the course and testimony of Christ's forerunner—*whereunto served it?* We know that by it the Jewish people as a whole *were not* prepared to receive Jesus as their Saviour, for they rejected and crucified Him. And if it be alleged that they who rejected and crucified Him were the scribes and Pharisees who also rejected the baptism of John, the answer to this is, that the people themselves gave their voices for His crucifixion, that His course had disappointed and irritated them as well as their rulers, or they would not have listened to these latter rather than to Him. Still, even in this matter I cannot doubt that much was done by the testimony of John. At the very last, when the enmity of the scribes and Pharisees was at its highest, we find they dared not insinuate that the baptism of John was not from heaven but of men—because all the people held John for a prophet. Now what a vast advantage must it have given the early preachers of the Gospel to have had to do with a people who held John for a prophet, for John's testimony to Jesus was a matter of notoriety.

II. We must not omit one purpose of God in raising up this remarkable forerunner to go before our Lord. He came "in the way of righteousness." He was to the scribes and Pharisees just one whom, if they had been in earnest at all, they would have hailed with eagerness and believed without hesitation.

He was full of the Old Testament spirit. His ascetic character, his stern morality, his utterance of his message in the well-known words of their prophets,—all this was exactly of a kind to please Jewish feelings and conciliate Jewish prejudices. Thus was additional evidence given to the fact that the rejection of Jesus by His own was not merely for any hostility that His own character and course excited in them, still less on account of His falling short of the announcements of their prophets, but because they were hardened in heart against God and indisposed to turn to Him at all.

III. But I must also believe that the mission of John the Baptist had purposes reaching beyond anything which, as matters of history or surmise, His course may then have accomplished. All that concerns Christ's coming on earth has deep spiritual meaning. And so it was with the mission and career of John the Baptist. (1) First, as to the place of his ministry. He came, a voice in the wilderness; a solitary preacher in the vast and trackless desert. And so does God ever send His messengers to prepare His way before Him. When Christ would come to an individual, or to a family, or to a nation, He sends before Him these voices crying in the wilderness. (2) Again, the character of the Baptist's message has a voice and meaning for us. "Every valley shall be exalted," etc. Before this glorious revelation shall be made, this levelling process must take place, both amongst mankind and within ourselves. In our own hearts these mountains of pride must be laid low which we have raised for ourselves, those low places must be filled up where we love to cleave to the dust in grovelling and worldly thoughts; the crookedness of our ways, half with God and half with the world and self, must be made straight, and the rough unevenness of inconsistent conduct made plain, before Christ can really have His throne in our hearts, dwelling and reigning there by His blessed Spirit. (3) One more lesson from the Baptist's course seems to be set before us. "He must increase, but I must decrease." All that merely leads on to, all that stops short of Christ Himself shall wane and fade; while He shall shine on ever more and more glorious.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 263.

REFERENCES: i. 23.—H. W. Burgoyne, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 193; A. C. Hall, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 401. i. 26.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 408; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. v., p. 32; J. Keble, *Sermons, from Advent to Christmas Eve*, p. 373.

Chap. i., ver. 29 (with John xx. 31).—**"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."**

WHAT is the most characteristic account of Christianity, by which its supporters may demand that its pretensions shall be tried? The Evangelist supplies us with a sufficient answer in the passages which I have joined together as the text. It is a system which aims at the remission of sins, through the means of faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as a preparation for the life of eternity. It is a method designed by the Divine wisdom, and carried out through a supreme Divine sacrifice, to bring all men back under the moral standard of exalted purity, brightened by a heavenly hope; though its progress is retarded by the opposition of a great antagonistic force, which struggles to retain men under the bondage of its sensual power.

I. When Christianity was first proclaimed, the world was well-nigh lost in sin. The noblest cultivation, and the most perfect art, and a skill in law and government which has never been surpassed, were unhappily found to be compatible with a baseness of moral degradation, the very language of which, by God's mercy, has now become obsolete and unknown. Now the Gospel revelation rests upon the principle that the removal of the weight and stain of moral evil was the first requisite for the restoration of a higher life; and that no cure could be found for the deeply-seated mischief, except through the renewed contact of God Himself with human nature—God Himself condescending to assume that nature, with the express purpose of winning back the world to purity and holiness. Christ came, not only to take up man's nature, and to show forth the noblest example of its capacities, but, more than this, by a still more marvellous condescension, He came to die for our sins, that thus the Blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, might "purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God." This is the concise summary of the whole matter, and the Christian argument must always remain weak and defective if it ever swerves aside from preaching its most important practical results, in the remission of sin through faith in Christ.

II. We must not rest satisfied, then, with the negative position, that the power of sin has been destroyed. It was the further object of the work of Christ that a higher life might be

created through faith in His Name. We must pass on from the removal of the hindrances by which man was fettered, to recognise the larger capabilities that were infused through the regenerate life. By the atonement of Christ the strength of sin was virtually broken; but the way was thereby opened for the development of nobler freedom. The new man was to be created afresh, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and thus he was to be brought back to that likeness of God s Image, which he had all but lost, through long centuries of alienation and sin. Being made free from sin, he was now to become the servant of righteousness. There is not a single talent or endowment which may not be raised to a higher level, and invested with a nobler character, if it is cultivated in a religious temper for religious ends.

III. Our estimate of the measure in which this ideal is fulfilled must be formed from the completeness with which these various duties are acknowledged and provided for; completeness being a fair and reasonable test of any theory of life and conduct. If we turn to the motives which influence the will, we can find none so pure and lofty as those which are inspired by faith, through the prospect of eternity. If we judge by the extension of the intellectual horizon, revelation teaches us to embrace the spiritual as well as the material, within the range of our knowledge. And lastly, if we are questioned on the claims of science, the true religious temper would welcome to the full its great discoveries, and be thankful for the means with which it has reached the families of men, but it would assign them their true position in the range of nature, and demand an equal admission for the principles of religion and morality to the circle of recognised knowledge.

ARCHDEACON HANNAH, *Oxford and Cambridge Undergraduates' Journal*, May 19th, 1881.

REFERENCES: i. 29.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 84; *Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 238; *Ibid.*, 3rd series, vol. vi., p. 320; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons to English Congregations in India*, p. 249; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 28; W. R. Nicoll, *The Lamb of God*, pp. 3, 21; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p, 121; J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 1; J. Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 100; J. Vaughan, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 209; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 548; *Ibid.*, vol. v., p. 8; *Ibid.*, vol. vi., p. 360; *Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 292. i. 29-35.—*Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 294; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 9; W. Milligan, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. iv., p. 273. i. 29-51.—A. B. Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve*, p. 1 i. 33.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. x., p. 99.

Chap. i., vers. 35-42.— **Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as He walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" etc.**

THE First Disciples.

I. We see here the very first beginnings of the Christian Church. With what reverent interest may we meetly regard this simple record of the beginning of that great kingdom which has made every other feel its sway. It has affected the stability of empires, overthrown old idolatries, exploded philosophies, and, in spite of opposition, has outspread itself already into almost world-wide breadth. And it begins here—with the Divine quietness which is characteristic of God's mightiest works. We have here no visible king, no rapt prophet, no scribe even to make record at the time of the event. The only scroll is the heart of the simple, the only writer the unseen Spirit of God.

II. We see not only the beginning of the Church, but also the beginning of first movements of personal religion. How does spiritual life begin in the individual heart? It begins when the person comes to Christ. The disciples all came; they were all received; and in that personal reception their higher life began.

III. We have here the Divine method of extending religion and of multiplying the number of disciples. There is a beautiful exemplification here of the law of personal influence. The whole passage is full of findings by Christ and by the disciples. It seems to be with a direct purpose that we have this minute mention of the finding of one disciple by another, of him who has not yet been with Jesus by him who has. It is as if the Holy Spirit would set before us conspicuously, at the very opening of the Christian Dispensation, one of the great laws by which the whole economy is to be replenished with new life, and extended to still wider bounds. True, this is not the only law of growth: the kingdom is to be extended many ways—by writing, by preaching, by quiet living, by suffering; but through all these it will be found, if we examine closely, that the personal element of religion permeates and lives. Whatever one possesses or attains in spiritual things he is bound, by the very law of the life he has received, to try and communicate to others who do not feel and possess as he does.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 250.

REFERENCES: i. 35, 36.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 360.

i. 35-40.—*Ibid.*, vol. i., p. 281. i. 35-41.—*Ibid.*, vol. vii., p. 275. *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vii., p. 22. i. 36.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xviii. No. 1,060.

Chap. i., vers. 37-9.—**"And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus," etc.**

The First Disciples—John and Andrew.

I. Look at the question of Christ to the whole world: What seek ye? As it stands, on the surface and in its primary application, it is the most natural of questions. Venturing to take the words in a somewhat wider application, let me suggest two or three directions in which they seem to point. (1) The question suggests to us this: the need of having a clear consciousness of what is our object in life. (2) These words are really a veiled and implied promise. Christ asks all such questions—not for His information, but for our strengthening. "What seek ye?" It is a blank cheque that He puts into their hands to fill up. It is the key of His treasure-house which He offers to all, with the assured confidence that if we open it we shall find all we need.

II. Now, how may we regard the second words which our Lord speaks as His merciful invitation to the world? "Come and see." (1) Christ is always glad when people resort to Him. (2) The revelation of the Master is also a very distinct call to a first-hand knowledge of Jesus Christ. (3) In this "Come and see" there is a distinct call to the personal act of faith.

III. Lastly, we have in these words a parable of the blessed experience which binds men's hearts to Jesus for ever. (1) The impression of Christ's own personality is the strongest force to make disciples. The character of Jesus Christ is, after all, the centre and the standing evidence, and the mightiest credentials of Christianity. (2) Once more, experience of the grace and sweetness of this Saviour binds men to Him as nothing else will. The deepest and sweetest and most precious part of His character and of His gifts can only be known on condition of possession of Him and them, and they can be possessed only on condition of holding fellowship with Him. I do not say to any man, Try, Trust, in order to be sure that Jesus Christ is worthy to be trusted; for by its very nature faith cannot be an experiment or provisional.

A. Maclaren, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 127.

References: i. 37.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xii., No. 702. i. 37-9.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 411. i. 37-51.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. x., No. 570; W. M. Taylor, *Peter the Apostle*, p. 21.

i. 38.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 306. i. 38, 39.—H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *Waterside Mission Sermons*, No. iii. i. 39.—J. B. Heard, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvii., p. 12; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 633.

Chap. i., ver. 40.—"**One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.**"

THE World's Benefactors.

I. Little as Scripture tells us of St. Andrew, it affords us enough for a lesson, and that an important one. These are the facts before us. St. Andrew was the first convert among the Apostles; he was especially in our Lord's confidence; thrice is he described as introducing others to Him; lastly, he is little known in history, while the place of dignity and the name of highest renown have been allotted to his brother Simon, whom he was the means of bringing to the knowledge of his Saviour. Our lesson, then, is this: that those men are not necessarily the most useful men in their generation, nor the most favoured of God, who make the most noise in the world, and who seem to be principals in the great changes and events recorded in history; and that, therefore, we must unlearn our admiration of the powerful and distinguished, our reliance on the opinions of society, our respect for the decisions of the learned or the multitude, and turn our eyes to private life, watching, in all we read or witness, for the true signs of God's presence, the graces of personal holiness manifested in His elect, which, weak as they may seem to mankind, are mighty through God, and have an influence upon the course of His providence, and bring about great events in the world at large, when the wisdom and the strength of the natural man are of no avail.

II. Andrew is scarcely known except by name; and while Peter has ever held the place of honour all over the Church, yet Andrew brought Peter to Christ. God's mysterious providence works beneath a veil, and to see Him who is the Truth and the Life, we must stoop underneath it, and so in our turn hide ourselves from the world. They who present themselves at kings' courts pass on to the inner chambers, where the gaze of the rude multitude cannot pierce; and we, if we would see the King in His beauty, must be content to disappear from the things that are seen. Hid are the saints of God; if they are known to men, it is accidentally, in their temporal offices, as holding some high earthly station, and not as saints. St. Peter has a place in history, far more as a chief instrument

of a strange revolution in human affairs, than in his true character, as a self-denying follower of his Lord, to whom truths were revealed which flesh and blood could not discern.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 1.

Chap. i., vers. 40-2.

THE First Disciples—Simon Peter.

In this incident we have two things mainly to consider—(1) the witness of the disciple; (2) the self-revelation of the Master.

I. The witness of the disciple. (1) Notice first the illustration that we get here of how instinctive and natural the impulse is, when one has found Jesus Christ, to tell some one else about Him. Nobody said to Andrew, "Go and look for your brother." And yet, as soon as he had fairly realised the fact that this man standing before him was the Messiah, though the evening seems to have come, he hurries away to find his brother, and share with him the glad conviction. (2) He *first* findeth *his own brother*. The language of the text suggests that the Evangelist's tendency to the suppression of himself hides away in this singular expression the fact that he, too, went to look for a brother. Home, then—those who are nearest to us—presents the natural channels for Christian work. (3) Notice the simple word which is the most powerful means of influencing most men. Andrew did not begin to argue with his brother. The mightiest argument that we can use, and the argument that we can all use, if we have got any religion in us at all, is that of Andrew, "We have found the Messias."

II. The self-revelation of the Master. It was the impression which Christ Himself made on Simon which completed the work begun by his brother. The look, which is described by an unusual word, was a penetrating gaze which regarded Peter with fixed attention. It must have been remarkable to have lived in John's memory for all these years. Our Lord shows himself possessed of supernatural and thorough knowledge. (2) Another revelation of our Lord's relation to His disciples is given in the fact of His changing Simon's name. He thus takes absolute possession of him, and asserts His mastery over him. (3) That change of name implies Christ's power and promise to bestow a new character and new functions and honours.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 141.

REFERENCES: i. 40.—J. Foster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xi., p. 390; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 422; J. Keble, *Sermons*

for Saints' Days, p. 11. i. 40, 41.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. vii., p. 279. i. 40-2.—R. Maguire, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 313; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 303.

Chap. i., vers. 41, 42.—**"He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ," etc.**

THE First Home Mission.

I. We have here the spring of all true home mission work. Andrew had himself made acquaintance with the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. Note the object of the mission, "And he brought him to Jesus." In any mission work we undertake we should be satisfied with nothing less than this.

III. Note the place of this mission. It was in the most emphatic sense a *home* mission, and this has its lesson for us. In our zeal for the foreign heathen we are not to forget our own kinsfolk. (1) They have not the only claim upon us, but they have the first claim. (2) Even for our own sakes we must think of home. We cannot let masses of ignorance and sin and wretchedness foster and grow without bringing a blight on our own Christianity.

IV. Look at the time chosen for this first home mission. Andrew did not wait to speak to his brother till he had been made an Apostle, or even till he had become one of Christ's regular disciples. He began at once. There is a lesson here for ministers. They must begin and continue in the spirit of Andrew, not counting hours, but watching opportunities and forgetting self in love to the souls of men and zeal for the glory of Christ.

V. Let us learn from the spirit of the first home mission, Andrew went to his brother, naturally, not from calculation, but because he had it in his heart. It is in this spirit we must go to our fellow-men, whether they be closely related or not.

VI. Look at the success of the first home mission. We cannot forget that it is to Andrew we owe Simon Peter and all that he did.

J. KER, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 100.

Chap. i., ver. 42.—**"Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone."**

THOSE words, strange perhaps as they might have sounded for the text of a sermon, must have sounded still stranger when Christ first spoke them to this man. It was a strange thing, indeed, to a man of the East, to whom a name always conveys

significant associations, to a member of that Hebrew race with whose sacred literature the thought of change of name was always bound up with the thought of change of life, work, character, or mode of thought—a strange thing to say to a man the first time you met him. Nevertheless, I think they show if we think of them, one of those characteristics of Christ that we pass over constantly, but which nevertheless, are second to none in the estimate of what He is and was as a man—I mean that insight into human character which marked all His dealings with His friends and with His foes.

I. Peter was impulsive, and he had the faults of an eager temper. He was fickle, he was a man who, when the greatest was demanded of him, failed in a manner we can only describe as feeble, unmanly, and even ridiculous. And depend upon it Christ saw that as well—only, He saw what a man of the world would not see, and that is what lay behind; for Christ sees men not only as they are, but as they may be. Christ sees men not only in their actual being, but in their ideal being. Christ sees men not only as they have made themselves, but as He meant them to be.

II. Sympathy *plus* self-forgetfulness makes up insight, and in the Lord Jesus Christ it was not only sympathy combined with self-forgetfulness, but sympathy associated with an absolute want of taint of selfishness. And that is the reason why His words, why His whole life, are the teaching fit for all ages of the world and for all characters that men may bear. Notice two points of the multiform moral of the story. They are very simple—Trust God, Trust men. Trust God, for God trusts you, and in spite of all that you have done to betray Him, He still gives you cause to hope for future labour in His service, and cause to know that you have capacity to do something for your fellow-men and for Him. Trust Him, and learn to trust, from Christ's dealings with Peter, learn to trust more fully your fellow men.

H. C. SHUTTLEWORTH, *Family Churchman*, Sep. 15th, 1886.

REFERENCES: i. 42.—J. G. Warren, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 177; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 276; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xv., No. 855; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 399.

Chap. i., ver. 43.—**"The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me."**

THE First Disciples—Philip. Note:—

I. The revelation which is here given us of the seeking Christ. Everyone who reads this chapter with even the slightest atten-

tion must observe how seeking and finding are repeated over and over again. Christ will welcome and over-answer Andrew and John when they come seeking; He will turn round to them with a smile on His face, that converts the question, "What seek ye?" into an invitation, "Come and see." And when Andrew brings his brother to Him, He will go more than half-way to meet him. But when these are won there still remains another way, by which He will have disciples brought into His kingdom, and that is by Himself going out and laying His hand on the man and drawing him to His heart by the revelation of His love.

II. Consider the word of authority, which, spoken to the one man in our text, is really spoken to us all. Jesus "findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me." Your Shepherd comes to you and calls, Follow Me; your Captain and Commander comes to you and calls, Follow Me. In all the dreary wilderness, in all the difficult contingencies and conjunctions, in all the conflicts of life—this Man strides in front of us and proposes Himself to us as Guide, Example, Consoler, Friend, Companion—everything; and gathers up all duty, all blessedness, in the majestic and simple words, Follow Me.

III. Think, for a moment, about this silently and swiftly obedient disciple. Philip says nothing. He is silent—but he yields. All decisions are matters of an instant. Hesitation may be long, weighing and balancing may be a protracted process, but the decision is always a moment's work, a knife edge. And there is no reason why anyone may not now, if he will, do as this man Philip did on the spot, and when Christ says, Follow Me, turn to Him and answer, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest."

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 155.

REFERENCE: i. 43.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iii., p. 185.

Chap. i., ver. 45.—"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write."

IN the closing verses of this chapter we have a narrative of the calling of some four or five of our Lord's earliest disciples. It is interesting on many accounts, more particularly perhaps on this—that it distinctly points out the *reason why* these men attached themselves to the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth.

I. Had Jesus Christ come in His own Name, as did many of the revolutionary chieftains of the time—had He appeared as a merely political Christ—the Jews would gladly and thankfully

have welcomed Him, even in spite of His Divine pretensions. But as it was, seeing that He disappointed their hopes, and practically disallowed the ideal which they had permitted themselves to set up, they turned upon Him in their fury, and cast Him out as a detected impostor. There is something remarkable, then, in the fact that these first disciples of Christ had a spiritual insight, so far superior to that of the rest of their fellow countrymen, that they could detect in Jesus of Nazareth what seemed to be hidden from the eyes of everybody else. Although not uneducated, and certainly not unintelligent men they had not, as we know, received the benefit of the highest culture of their day; and yet, while doctors and Sanhedrists, scribes and Pharisees, with all their learning, were blind to the glory of Jesus, these simple-minded Galilean fishermen were perfectly assured that it was He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write.

II. Consider the reason why the Jews of the present day ought to believe that the Messiah has already come. (1) The time of the Messiah's Advent is distinctly announced in the ancient Scriptures—and distinctly announced, we think—as occurring between the return of the nation from the Babylonish captivity and its subsequent destruction and scattering at the hands of the Romans. (2) Two different comings of Messiah, different in their characteristics and attributes, are spoken of in the writings of the prophets. The one coming is to a people living in their own land, having a city, having laws, having a national existence; the other coming is to a people scattered in all quarters of the earth, and needing to be brought back to the land given by Divine covenant to them and to their fathers.

G. CALTHROP, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 1,034.

REFERENCE: i. 45.—A. Edersheim, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xiii., p. 157.

Chap. i., vers. 45-9.

THE First Disciples—Nathanael.

I. Look first at the preparation—a soul brought to Christ by a brother. "Philip findeth Nathanael." Nathanael's prejudice was but the giving voice to a fault that is as wide as humanity, and which we have every day of our lives to fight with, not only in regard of religious matters, but in regard of all others—namely, the habit of estimating people, and their work, and their wisdom, and their power, by the class to which they are supposed to belong. "Philip saith unto him, Come and see."

He is not going to argue the question. He gives the only possible answer to it. "You ask me, Can any good thing come out of Nazareth? Come and see whether it is a good thing or no; and if it is, and came out of Nazareth, well then, the question has answered itself." The quality of a thing cannot be settled by the origin of a thing.

II. The conversation between Christ and Nathanael, where we see a soul fastened to Christ by Himself. The omniscience of Christ, as manifested here, shows (1) how glad Christ is when He sees anything good, anything that He can praise, in any of us. (2) We have here our Lord's omniscience set forth as cognisant of all our inward crises and struggles. In our hours of crisis, and in our monotonous uneventful moments; in the rush of the furious waters, when the stream of our lives is caught among rocks, and in the long, languid reaches of its smoothest flow; when we are fighting with our fears, or yearning for His light; or even when sitting dumb and stolid, like snow men, apathetic and frozen in our indifference—He sees us, and pities, and will help the need which He beholds.

III. One word more about this rapturous confession which crowns the whole: "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel." The joybells of the man's heart are all a-ringing. It is no mere intellectual acknowledgment of Christ as Messiah. The difference between mere head-belief and heart-faith lies precisely in the presence of these elements of confidence, of enthusiastic loyalty, and absolute submission.

A. MACLAREN, *A Year's Ministry*, 2nd series, p. 169.

REFERENCES: i. 45-51.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvi., No. 921; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. vii., p. 22; *Ibid.*, 4th series, vol. i., p. 240.

Chap. i., ver. 46.—"Philip saith unto him, Come and see."

THE Duties of Heavenly Citizenship towards Infidelity.

I. The heavenly citizen must first be deeply convinced of the truth of the proposition, *Magna est veritas et prævalebit.* In "contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," his contention will be rather to persuade men than to defend God; not, Uzzah-like, to imagine that he will uphold that which is tottering. This reflection will free him from timidity as to any supposed conflict between science and revelation. "Without Him was not anything made that was made." The investigating faculty of man is the boring tool, whereby the glories of the living God are dug out of His mines, and in the reverent pursuit of natural science the thoughts of God become visible.

II. Those who know the secret of the Lord will lead the

anxious doubter away from systems, controversies, and debates, into the presence of the Lord Himself. Philip of Bethsaida, in the history before us, illustrates the true method. He had found Jesus, had recognised in Him the Christ—God's answer to the hunger and thirst of humanity; such a knowledge evidences its reality by its self-communicativeness. He rushes to his friend, without preface, argument or explanation; he says, "I have found the Christ." He knows what he has found; he can at least invite trial; he is not afraid to subject the blessed truth, which was flooding his whole being with its vivid light, to the most searching analysis, the closest investigation. "Philip saith unto him, Come and see." Here is the one absolute, irrefragable Christian evidence: the power of Jesus Christ to satisfy every human instinct, to fill the heart to overflowing, to save to the uttermost, to elevate the affections, to perfect the nature, to ennoble the character, of fallen man. Inasmuch as the best sermon is a life, our life should so witness that men should be compelled to acknowledge that "the life we live in the flesh we live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us and gave Himself for us."

CANON WILBERFORCE, *Christian Commonwealth*, Oct. 29th, 1885.

REFERENCES: i. 46.—T. Islip, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 42; W. M. Arthur, *Ibid.*, vol. xxxi., p. 316; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 351; J. Hamilton, *Works*, vol. vi., p. 453; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 43.

Chap. i., ver. 47.—"Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!"

GUILELESSNESS.

An even unvaried life is the lot of most men, in spite of occasional troubles or other accidents; and we are apt to despise it and get tired of it, and to long to see the world—or, at all events, we think such a life affords no great opportunity for religious obedience. Here we have the history of St. Bartholomew and the other Apostles to recall us to ourselves, and to assure us that we need not give up our usual manner of life in order to serve God; that the most humble and quiet station is acceptable to Him—nay, affords means for maturing the highest Christian character, even that of an Apostle. Bartholomew read the Scriptures and prayed to God, and thus was trained at length to give up his life for Christ when He demanded it.

I. Consider the particular praise which our Saviour gives him: "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" This

is just the character which, through God's grace, they may attain most fully who live out of the world in a private way. It is a most difficult and rare virtue to mean what we say, to love without dissimulation, to think no evil, to bear no grudge, to be free from selfishness, to be innocent and straightforward. This character of mind is something far above the generality of men; and when realised in due measure, one of the surest marks of Christ's elect. Such men are cheerful and contented, for they desire but little and take pleasure in the least matters, having no wish for riches or distinction. The guileless man has a simple boldness and a princely heart; he overcomes dangers which others shrink from, merely because they are no dangers to him, and thus he often gains even worldly advantages by his straightforwardness which the most crafty persons cannot gain, though they risk their souls for them.

II. Nor is it only among the poor and lowly that this blessed character of mind is found to exist. Secular learning and dignity have doubtless a tendency to rob the heart of its brightness and purity; yet even in kings' courts and the schools of philosophy Nathanaels may be discovered. Lastly, more is requisite from the Christian even than guilelessness such as Bartholomew's. Innocence must be joined to prudence, discretion, self-command, gravity, patience, perseverance in well-doing; but innocence is the beginning.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 333.

REFERENCES: i 47.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 425; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. x., p. 270; Spurgeon, *My Sermon Notes: Gospels and Acts*, p. 124; W. G. Horder, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 152. i. 48.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 271; *Ibid.*, vol. x., p. 68; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. viii., p. 376; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 2nd series, 62.

Chap. i.. vers. 50, 51.—**"Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these," etc.**

WE have here—

I. The dawn of faith. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?"

II. The fact of experience from which faith begins is the dawning of a faith that must continually grow. Two things are necessary to the strengthening of belief. (1) Its evidence must be certain. (2) Its power must develop with advancing life.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 167.

REFERENCES: i. 50, 51.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,478;

T. Gasquoine, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 261. i. 51.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 168; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 329; G. Moberly, *Plain Sermons at Brighstone*, p. 169; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 283. i. 52.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iii., p. 134. ii. 1.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. v., p. 548; J. M. Neale, *Sermons in a Religious House*, vol. i., p. 229. ii. 1.—C. C. Bartholomew, *Sermons Chiefly Practical*, p. 27; H. J. Wilmot-Buxton, *The Life of Duty*, vol. i., p. 67. ii. 1, 2.—A. P. Stanley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. v., p. 49; C. Kingsley, *National Sermons*, p. 312. ii. 1-11.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., pp. 53, 400; *Ibid.*, vol. ii., p. 490. ii. 3-5.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xv., p. 318. ii. 4.—*Expositor*, 1st series, vol. iv., p. 179; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, p. 407.

Chap. ii., ver. 5.—"Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it."

We must perceive at once the peculiar appropriateness with which this miracle was chosen as the first to be performed by our Lord, when we bear in mind that the great object of our Lord's incarnation was to reunite, in ties compared to the bonds of marriage, the human nature with the Divine.

I. It was a festal occasion, and how could our gracious Lord but rejoice at the commencement of that stupendous work of Divine mercy which, determined upon before the world began, by the kindness of God the blessed Trinity, He had now come to effect? Yet whilst the Lord Jesus cheered His heart at the commencement of His ministry by adorning the marriage feast with His presence, and so contemplating His own union with His spouse, the Church, there is melancholy in these words, "Mine hour is not yet come," which speaks to the heart of every one who truly weighs their meaning.

II. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." This is our exhortation. Be in the way of duty, and God will be with you. And herein how blessed and how wonderful is the example set us by our Lord Himself! The greatest miracle, as an old writer has observed, is that Christ should have been for thirty years on earth and yet have worked no miracle till now. For thirty years He did not manifest His powers even to His kinsmen; for thirty years He pursued a carpenter's trade in a remote town of Galilee, obscure, despised. For almost His whole life His was a career of obscurity such as the ambitious must despise. His was a life of inactivity such as the active, the zealous, the busybodies must consider useless. His was a life most certainly which no son of man so endowed (looking merely to endowments of our Lord's human nature) could have led without the special

and restraining grace of God. Thus Christ teaches us that our perfection and true greatness consist, in the eyes of angels and of those just men made perfect who form the Church invisible and triumphant, in doing God's will, whatever that will may be, in that situation in which He sees fit, by the ordinance of His Providence, to place us.

W. F. Hook, *Sermons on the Miracles*, vol. i., p. 1.

References: ii. 5.—Parker, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vii., p. 1; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. vii., p. 28. ii. 7.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxvi., No. 1,556. ii. 9, 10.—*Ibid.*, vol. v., Nos. 225, 226. ii. 10.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iii., p. 24; J. Keble, *Sermons for Christmas and Epiphany*, pp. 421, 441; *Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 345.

Chap. ii., ver. 11.—"This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth His glory; and His disciples believed on Him."

I. Beyond doubt this was a miracle of sympathy; and, which perhaps we should not have expected, sympathy with festivity and joy. The hardest kind of sympathy, as everyone who has tried it knows, is to throw a mind that is saddened—which Christ's mind was always—into the happiness of others. It is singular, too, that though it was a first thing, its great point and object was to teach about the last—that with what Christ does, and what Christ gives, unlike and the very opposite to what man does and what the world gives, the last is always the best; and that it grows sweeter, richer, truer, even to the end.

II. Miracles always cluster about the beginnings of new dispensations, or, which is the same thing, about great reformations in an old religion: as Moses, and Joshua, and the Judges, and Elijah that great reformer, and Christ. They are to establish the credibility, the Divine mission, the glory of the leaders of a new system or the teachers of a new faith.

III. There are many definitions of a miracle, but they all come to this—it is a suspension of the laws of Nature, or an effect without its usual cause; and if this makes a miracle, there is very little difference, indeed, between such a work as Christ did at Cana and what He does in every soul which is a partaker of His grace. For in every converted heart, the law of its own nature has been suspended; and no physical cause whatever could account for that effect which has been produced in the change of its tastes and its affections. And it is like the operation of the water at the marriage feast. For by a secret and mysterious process a new principle, a virtue not its own, is

introduced and mingled with the original elements of the man's character; and so it comes forth in a strength and a sweetness which were never conceived before, which are for life and refreshment, and usefulness and cheer. Yet this change is but "the beginning of miracles." Many other as wonderful works will follow, for sustaining grace is to the full as great a marvel as converting grace.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 7th series, p. 78.

NOTE:—

I. Christ's sympathy with the relationships and gladness of man's life.

II. His elevation of the natural into the Divine; of the common into the uncommon.

III. Can a man be really heavenly in his daily tasks and in his human friendships? Yes, for (1) the character of man's deeds is determined by their inner motive, not by their outward form; (2) his sanctity is attained through the power of Christ's love.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 3rd series, p. 35.

I. WHAT is a miracle? A miracle is an interference with the common course of Nature by some power above Nature. Any one who believes in a personal Author and Governor of Nature, will have no difficulty in believing in miracles. The same Almighty Being who made and upholds Nature, can interfere, whenever it pleases Him, with the ordinary course of Nature, which He has Himself prescribed. To say that He cannot do this, is manifestly foolish and presumptuous in the extreme; we cannot set bounds to His purposes, nor tell beforehand how He may be pleased to accomplish them.

II. As there are good and bad miracles—miracles of Divine goodness and miracles of lying spirits—one thing must be very plain to us, viz., that by miracles alone no man can be proved to be sent from God. What, then, were our Lord's miracles, as regards their place in His great work? They held a very important place, but they did not hold the chief place, in the evidences of His mission. He turned water into wine, He spoke and the winds were silent, He commanded diseases with a word. So far, the power might be from above or from beneath. But, coupled with His holy and blameless life, and His love of God and obedience to God, these works of power took another character, and became signs—St. John's usual word for them—signs whence He came; they became, when

viewed together with the consistent and unvarying character of His teaching and life, most valuable and decisive evidences to His Messiahship. Our Lord's miracles are full of goodness to the bodies and souls of men. Each of them has its own fitness, as adapted to His great work, and to the will of the Father, which He came to accomplish. Each one tends to manifest forth His glory; shows forth some gracious attribute, some deep sympathy.

III. In this particular miracle (1) our Lord, in ministering to the fulness of human joy, shows more completely the glory of His Incarnation than if He had ministered to human sorrow; because, under Him and in His kingdom, all sorrow is but a means to joy—all sorrow ends in joy. (2) The gift of wine sets forth the invigorating and cheering effects of the Spirit of God on man's heart. (3) He kept His best to the last. (4) All this He will do, not at our time, but at His own.

H. ALFORD, *Sermons on Christian Doctrine*, p. 82.

As of all our Lord's miracles this was the first, so of all its symbolical character is most plainly perceived, as lying on the very surface. That material gift of God, which He here so abundantly and miraculously imparted, is used in Scripture as a common symbol for the gladdening and invigorating influence of the Spirit under the new covenant. As, then, Christ came to shed down upon the world the higher spiritual gift, so He begins His miracles by imparting in a wonderful manner the lower and material one which symbolises the other.

I. One great feature of the Lord's working in this parable must not escape our notice. The gift which He bestowed was not according to the slow progress of man's proceeding, but direct from His own creative hand. No ministry of man or angel intervened between His will and the bestowal of the gift. Even so it is with His other spiritual gifts; man wrought them not out, nor did we ourselves provide their conditions or their elements; the best we can say of them, and all we can say of them, is that they came from Him. Man may imitate them, may build up their likeness, but man can never endue them with life.

II. There is another particular, in our Lord's operation on this occasion, which deserves our notice. At first, He created out of nothing. Since that first act, however, He does so no longer. But out of that which is poor and weak and despised, He by His wondrous power and in His wondrous love, brings

that which is rich and glorious. And thus His glory is manifested forth. He created the wine, but it was out of water; and even so it is in our own lives. We build not up, we provide not the materials of the spiritual state within us; yet it is a transformation, not a creation out of nothing. In our weakness His strength is perfected.

III. "Thou hast kept the good wine until now." This was not, is not, the way of the world. First, the good is put forth. The show is made. All pains are spent; all appliances collected; all costs bestowed; the image is uncovered, and the multitude fall down and adore. But the joy wears out, the wonder departs, and the beautiful image becomes blurred and defaced by climate and by decay. Not so is it with Him whom we love: His beginnings are small and unobtrusive, His progress is gradual and sure. He remembers the end, and He never does amiss.

H. ALFORD, *Quebec Chapel Sermons*, vol. iii., p. 16.

REFERENCES: ii. 11.—C. Kingsley, *All Saints' Day*, p. 320; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. i., p. 75; H. P. Liddon, *Christmastide Sermons*, p. 368; G. E. L. Cotton, *Sermons and Addresses in Marlborough College*, p. 459; W. M. Taylor, *The Gospel Miracles*, p. 207; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 57; W. H. King, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 120; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. v., p. 112; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 88; A. Barry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxv., p. 17. ii. 13-17.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 181.

Chap. ii., vers. 15-17.—"**And when He had made a scourge of small cords, He drove them all out of the Temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables,**" etc.

"My Father's House."

I. In this passage we find our Lord, in the first instance, disconnecting, jealously disconnecting, all temporal from spiritual things; endeavouring to do away with that worldly spirit which comes into our holy things. Now, in the letter of the thing, we are not in danger in the present day of any exact parallel to that which drew down our Saviour's indignant reproof upon those who kept the market, and came with beasts and money within the precincts of the Jewish Temple. Yet let us never forget that, before God, the inner life of thought is as real life as the outer life of action. Therefore, thoughts in the house of God are as real to our Heavenly Father as any act can be. If, when within the sacred walls, to think of secular transactions

be reprehensible in the sight of God, which of us is not brought in guilty before His omniscient eye.

II. It was Christ's desire to purify His spiritual house. It is for the purity of that Church that our blessed Lord and Master is so anxious, and for which He prays, and for which He shed His Blood; and for which now, in heaven, He intercedes; and for the sake of which He looks to His Second Advent. There is a wonderful prophecy in Mal. iii. 1: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His Temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in . . . but who may abide the day of His coming?" In this verse you will notice that the Lord who is to come to His Temple is to come as the Jews' delight, and He is to come suddenly. The Lord did come suddenly on the occasion of my text. He appeared suddenly among the Jews, who then despised Him, but He did not come as the Lord in His glory. But He is to come again to His Church; and if, as we believe, in the restoration of the Jews to their own country, they shall rear again Ezekiel's temple, then in Ezekiel's temple literally the Lord Himself shall come, even the Messenger of the Covenant, whom they shall delight in. Not as the carpenter's son, but as the Lord in His glory; and He will come, and come to purify.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 171.

REFERENCES: ii. 16.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vi., p. 262; *Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 211; J. M. Neale, *Sermons for the Christian Year*, vol. i., p. 161.

Chap. ii., ver. 17.—"The zeal of Thine house hath eaten me up."

I. ZEAL is one of the elementary religious qualifications—that is, one of those which are essential to the very notion of a religious man. A man cannot be said to be in earnest in religion till he magnifies his God and Saviour; till he so far consecrates and exalts the thought of Him in his heart, as an object of praise and adoration and rejoicing, as to be pained and grieved at dishonour shown to Him, and eager to avenge Him. In a word, a religious temper is one of loyalty towards God; and we all know what is meant by being loyal from the experience of civil matters. To be loyal is not merely to obey, but to obey with promptitude, energy, dutifulness, disinterested devotion, disregard of consequences. And such is zeal, except that it is ever attended with that reverential feeling which is due from a creature and a sinner towards his Maker, and towards Him alone.

II. On the other hand, zeal is an imperfect virtue; that is, in our fallen state, it will ever be attended by unchristian feelings if it is cherished by itself. (1) Love perfects zeal, purifying and regulating it. (2) Faith is another grace which is necessary to the perfection of zeal. We have need of faith, not only that we may direct our actions to a right object, but that we may perform them rightly; it guides us in choosing the means as well as the end. Now, zeal is very apt to be self-willed; it takes upon itself to serve God in its own way. Patience, then, and resignation to God's will, are tempers of mind of which zeal stands especially in need—that dutiful faith which will take nothing for granted on the mere suggestion of nature, looks up to God with the eyes of a servant towards his master, and, as far as may be, ascertains His will before he acts. If this heavenly corrective be wanting, zeal becomes what is called political. Christian zeal plans no intrigues; it recognises no parties; it relies on no arm of flesh. It looks for no essential improvements or permanent reformations in the dispensation of those precious gifts which are ever pure in their origin, ever corrupted in man's use of them. It acts according to God's will, this time or that, as it comes, boldly and promptly; yet letting each act stand by itself, as a sufficient service to Him, not connecting them in one, or working them into system, further than He commands. In a word, Christian zeal is not political.

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. ii., p. 379.

REFERENCES: ii. 17.—A. Barry, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 17; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ii., p. 95. ii. 18.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Village Sermons*, 4th series, p. 120.

Chap. ii., ver. 19.—"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

THE Destroyers and the Restorer.

This is our Lord's answer to the Jewish request for a sign which should warrant His action in cleansing the Temple. "Destroy this temple," said our Lord, as His sufficient and only answer to the demand for a sign; "and in three days I will raise it up." We see in these words—

I. An enigmatical forecast of our Lord's own history. Notice, (1) that marvellous and unique consciousness of our Lord as to His own dignity and nature. "He spake of the temple of His body." Think that here is a Man, apparently one of ourselves, walking amongst us, living the common life of humanity, who declares that in Him, in an altogether solitary and peculiar

fashion, there abides the fulness of Deity. And not only does the fulness abide, but in Him the awful remoteness of God becomes for us a merciful presence; the infinite abyss and closed sea of the Divine Nature hath an outlet and becomes a river of water of life. And as the ancient name of that Temple was the tent of meeting, the place where Israel and God, in symbolical and ceremonial form, met together, so in inmost reality in Christ's nature, Manhood and Divinity cohere and unite; and in Him all of us—the weak, the sinful, the alien, the rebellious—may meet our Father. (2) Still further, notice how we have here, at the very beginning of our Lord's career, His distinct prevision of how it was all going to end. The Shadow of the Cross fell upon His path from the beginning, because the Cross was the purpose for which He came. He knows that He goes up to be the lamb of the offering, and knowing it, He goes. (3) We have here our Lord's claim to be Himself the Agent of His own Resurrection. "I will raise it up at the last day." He is the Lord of the Temple as well as the Temple.

II. We see here, in the next place, a prophetic warning of the history of the men to whom He was speaking. Christ's death having realised all which Temple worship symbolised, that which was the shadow was put away when the substance appeared. The destroyed Temple disappears, and out of the dust and smoke of the vanishing ruins, there rises, beautiful and serene, though incomplete and fragmentary and defaced with many a stain, the fairer reality, the Church of the living Christ.

III. We have here a foreshadowing of our Lord's world-wide work as the restorer of man's destructions. If you will put yourselves in His hands and trust yourselves to Him, He will take away all your incompleteness, and will make you, body, soul, and spirit, temples of the Lord God; as far above the loftiest beauty and whitest sanctity of any Christian character here on earth as is the "building of God, the house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens," above "the earthly house of this tabernacle."

A. MACLAREN, *Christian Commonwealth*, April 20th, 1886.

REFERENCES: ii. 19.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 46; J. Keble, *Sermons from Easter to Ascension Day*, p. 54. ii. 19-22.—D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 257. ii. 21.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 403; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. v., p. 286. ii. 23.—C. W. Furse, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxviii., p. 321. ii. 23-5.—T. Hammond, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 165. ii. 24.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 424. ii. 24, 25.—G. T. Coster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xvi., p. 116; A. F. Muir, *Ibid.*, vol. xvii., p. 365.

Chap. ii., ver. 25.—"He knew what was in man."

THE idea of a physician, when complete and considered apart from human imperfections, contains these three things: He must know the patient's constitution, his disease, and his cure. He must understand, (i.) what was the nature and capacity of the subject originally and before he was afflicted with disease; (ii.), the ailment under which he labours; and, (iii.) what will restore the diseased to health again. Jesus Christ knows—

I. What was in man as he came at first from his Creator's hand. God made man upright, and that uprightness is known to Him on whom our help has been laid. The Son of God knew that the constitution of humanity admitted of complete communion with God, as a child in a father's bosom, and yet complete submission to God's will, as the creature of His hand.

II. What was in man when he had fallen. Knowing the character of the perfect work, the Saviour knows also the amount of damage that it has sustained. He knows, also, the gravity of man's sin, as an event affecting all the plans of God, and the government of all intelligent beings. As the defection of a chief carries away all that owned his sway, the fall of man affected the condition and prospects of the universal kingdom.

III. Knowing the original constitution and the subsequent disease of the patient, the Physician knew also what would restore him, and was able to apply the cure. Knowing the worth of man as God had made him, our Physician would not abandon the wreck; but knowing how complete the wreck was, He bowed His heavens and came down to save. He united Himself to us, became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that He might raise us up. He so knit Himself to His own on earth that if He should rise, so must they. Some lessons:—(1) Speaking of the individual and of the unconverted, He knows what is in man, and yet He does not cast out the unclean. Lepers were not allowed to dwell among the people, but He who is holy, harmless, and undefiled, welcomes the leprous to His bosom. (2) Speaking now of His own disciples, He knows what is in them, and with that knowledge, it is because He is God and not man, that He does not shake them off. (3) He knows what is in man, and therefore can make His Word and providence suitable. His providences, although for the time they may seem mysterious, all work together for our good. (4) He knows what is in man—in the secret chambers of each heart. W. ARNOT, *The Anchor of the Soul*, p. 125.

REFERENCES: ii. 25.—*Homilist*, vol. vi., p. 263; W. G. Horder,

Christian World Pulpit, vol. xxxii., p. 45. iii. 1.—G. T. Coster, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 61. iii. 1, 2.—T. Foster, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p 259; T. Hammond, *Ibid.*, vol. xiii., p. 165. iii. 1-3.—J. Baldwin Brown, *Ibid.*, vol. xix., p. 136. iii. 1-11.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 18. iii. 1-15.—*Ibid.*, p. 276; W. Landels, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxix., p. 33. iii. 1-16.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 199. iii. 1-17.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ii., p. 329. iii. 2.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. iv., p. 181; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 296; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 149.

Chap. iii., ver. 3.—"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

I. The first thing to be observed, as we read this discourse just as it lies before us, is the clear deliverance, by implication at least, on the doctrine of the complete depravity of human nature. It was to Nicodemus—with his morality and unblemished life, with his position as a teacher of the only true religion that was in the world at the time, and not to some dark, sin-defiled creature who had trampled on all law—that the Saviour says, "You are all wrong; you must be born again."

II. The next and corresponding truth is the radical character of the religion of Christ. In order to meet this great need, that religion goes to the root of everything within us, and touching and transforming all creates us anew in Christ Jesus.

III. The inexorable character of this requirement. It is a law of the kingdom of Christ, and it stands at the entrance to that kingdom, never to be disannulled: "Ye must be born again." Like the rocks which sometimes guard the entrance to a safe and spacious harbour, these words stand. A ship must enter *here*, or turn back to the wide ocean, with no haven or home.

IV. Although this law is itself radical and inexorable, there is nothing uniform or unchangeable as to times and modes of its fulfilment. In these there may be, and indeed there is, endless variety. As it is well not to fall short of the teaching of Scripture, it is also well not to go beyond it. In this matter of regeneration or conversion, nothing can be firmer and clearer than the law, nothing wider and more unlimited than the mode.

V. This great change is very blessed. Great happiness will accrue to a man when it is accomplished, and when he is living the new life in Christ. It is, indeed, a most blessed thing that such a change is possible, still more that it is realised in actual

fact; that it occurs in cases around us; that God thus comes to dwell with men; that His Spirit touches and transforms human spirits; that men become new creatures in Christ Jesus. These are great and good things. "Ye *may* be born again." Does not that give a new and more luminous aspect of the case? Why should we look upon the new birth only as a stern necessity? Why not regard it as a glorious privilege? It is by far the most beneficent change that takes place under the sun. It is the seed of all virtue, the starting-point of an endless progress, the first outburst of the living water springing up into everlasting life.

A. RALEIGH, *From Dawn to the Perfect Day*, p. 108.

REFERENCES: iii. 3.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. x., p. 201; vol. xxx, p. 33; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 130; G. Moberly, *Plain Sermons at Brighstone*, p. 1; F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 85.

Chap. iii., vers. 5, 6.—**"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."**

I. BY "being born again" is meant exactly the same thing as by "rising again;" or, rather, the same two things are meant by it. In its literal sense it means what is meant by the Resurrection literally; that is, our entrance upon a new state of being, after our present one is over. By being born, we came into this world from a state of nothingness; by being born again, we shall pass into another world from a similar state of nothingness —that is, from death. This is being born again literally; and by thus being born again we enter into the kingdom of God. Now, in one sense certainly we are all in His kingdom already. We cannot go anywhere where He is not over all; we see the whole of Nature around us, the very stars of heaven in their courses moving according to His laws. But here there are some things which do not obey Him, but have chosen to themselves another king; and these things are the evil hearts of men. It will then be the kingdom of God truly and perfectly, when there shall be nothing which does not obey Him—when not the earth, the moon, and the stars shall move more entirely according to His will than the hearts of all His reasonable creatures.

II. Into this kingdom of God, into this new and Divine life, we can by no natural process be born. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. By His new creation a new nature is wrought for us, incapable of delay, incapable of sin, and so fit

for the eternal society of God. It is still by the Spirit and the water and the blood, all agreeing in one, that we are brought nearer and nearer to the redemption of our body, to the real resurrection, the real birth, into the kingdom of God; not by water only—that is by repentance—but by water and blood, by our repentance and our grateful faith in God's love through Christ; and not by these only, but by the constant indwelling of the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead; that abiding with us, and ripening in us all His blessed fruits of love and peace and joy, He may, when our spirits are fully quickened, quicken also our mortal bodies; that having heard Christ's call from the death of sin, and having arisen to His spiritual life, we may hear it also from the very grave, and come forth and be born again to a life which shall never die.

T. ARNOLD, *Sermons*, vol. vi., p. 124.

REFERENCES: iii. 5, 6.—H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 172. iii. 5-8.—*Homilist*, vol. iv., p. 361. iii. 5, 16, 17.—*Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. iv., p. 225. iii. 6.—*Homilist*, 4th series, vol. i., p. 40; T. T. Carter, *Sermons*, p. 15; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 185; H. Scott Holland, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxvii., p. 1; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. i., p. 222. iii. 6, 7.—*Church of England Pulpit*, vol. xix., p. 49. iii. 7.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 350; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 224; J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascensiontide to Trinity*, p. 219; *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 186; *Ibid.*, vol. viii., p. 204; Spurgeon, *Morning by Morning*, p. 66; *Ibid.*, *Sermons*, vol. xxv., No. 1,455. iii. 7, 8.—*Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiii., p. 347; J. Caird, *Sermons*, p. 65; G. Dawson, *The Authentic Gospel*, p. 58.

Chap. iii., ver. 8.—**"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."**

THE Fruits of the Spirit.

I. Such words as those of the text must sound as dreams to those analytical philosophers, who allow nothing in man below the sphere of consciousness actual or possible; who have dissected the human mind till they find in it no personal will, no indestructible spiritual self, but a character which is only the net result of innumerable states of consciousness; who hold that man's outward actions, and also his inmost instincts, are all the result either of calculations about profit and loss, pleasure, pain, or of emotions, whether hereditary or acquired. Ignoring the deep and ancient distinction—which no one ever brought out so clearly as St. Paul—between the flesh and the spirit, they hold that man is flesh and can be nothing more; that each person is

not really a person, but is the consequence of his brain and nerves, and having thus, by logical analysis, got rid of the spirit of man, their reason and their conscience quite honestly and consistently see no need for, no possibility of, a Spirit of God, to ennoble and enable the human spirit.

II. But St. Paul says, and we say, that, crushed under this animal nature, there is in man a spirit; we say that, below all his consciousness there is a nobler element, a Divine spark, or at least a Divine fuel, which must be kindled into life by the Divine Spirit, the Spirit of God. And we say that, in proportion as that Spirit of God kindles the spirit of man, he begins to act after a fashion for which he can give no logical reason; that by instinct, and without calculation of profit or loss, pleasure or pain, he begins to act on what he calls duty, honour, love, self-sacrifice. And we say, moreover, that those who deny this, and dream of a morality and a civilisation without the Spirit of God, are unconsciously throwing down the ladder by which they themselves have climbed, and sawing off the very bough to which they cling.

C. KINGSLEY, *Westminster Sermons*, p. 67.

LET us briefly endeavour to trace the import of this simile in three forms of the action of the Eternal Spirit: His creation of a sacred literature; His guidance of a Divine society; His work upon the individual soul.

I. As we turn ever the pages of the Bible, must we not say, "The wind bloweth where it listeth"? The Bible is like Nature in its immense, its exhaustless, variety. Like Nature, it reflects all the higher moods of the human soul, because it does more—because it brings us face to face with the infinity of the Divine life. In the Bible the wind of heaven pays scant heed to our anticipations or our prejudices. It "bloweth where it listeth." The Spirit is in the genealogies of the Chronicles not less than in the last conversation of the Supper-room, though with an admitted difference of manner and degree.

II. The words of the text have an application in the life of the Church of Christ. We may trace revivals in it all along the line of history. The Spirit living in the Church has by them attested His presence and His will, and has recalled a lukewarm generation, paralysed by indifference and degraded by indulgence, to the spirit and level of Christian faith and love. In such movements there is often what seems at first sight an element of caprice. It is easy, as we survey them, to say some-

thing else was needed, that what was done might have been done better and more completely. But we forget whose work it is, though overlaid and thwarted by human passion, that we may be criticising. The Eternal Spirit is passing, and we can only say, He breatheth when He listeth.

III. Especially our Lord's words apply to the Christian character. We know not the purpose of each saintly life in the designs of Providence; we know not much of the depths and heights whence it draws its inspiration; we cannot tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth. We only know that He whose workmanship it is bloweth where He listeth. Not in caprice, or by accident, but because He knows exactly of what material each of His creatures is made, and apportions His distinctions with the unerring decision of perfect love and perfect justice.

H. P. LIDDON, *Oxford and Cambridge Journal*, June 8th, 1876.

I. SPIRITUAL Life a Divine Inspiration. (1) Spiritual life is impossible without this inspiration. (2) That inspiration enters man in mystery.

II. Look at some of the results of realising this truth. (1) It would strengthen spiritual manhood. (2) It imparts nobility to character. (3) It gives power to our Christian hope.

E. L. HULL, *Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 63.

REFERENCES: iii. 8.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xi., No. 630; *Ibid.*, vol. xxiii., No. 1,356; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. iii., p. 260; D. Fraser, *Metaphors of the Gospels*, p. 267; G. Moberly, *Plain Sermons at Brighstone*, p. 231; E. Johnson, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxiv., p. 67; *Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. i., p. 82; G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 350; H. W. Beecher, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. ii., p. 180; J. Foster, *Ibid.*, vol. xviii., p. 356; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 418; *Expositor*, 1st series, vol. xii., p. 237; J. Keble, *Sermons from Septuagesima to Ash Wednesday*, p. 333.

Chap. iii., ver. 9.—"How can these things be?"

THE Christian Mysteries.

The Feast of Trinity succeeds Pentecost; the light of the Gospel does not remove mysteries in religion. This is our subject. Let us enlarge upon it.

I. Consider such difficulties in religion as press upon us independently of the Scriptures. Now we shall find the Gospel has not removed these; they remain as great as before Christ came. Why does God permit so much evil in His own world? This was a mystery before God gave His revelation. It is as

great a mystery now, and doubtless for this reason, because knowledge about it would do us no good; it would merely satisfy curiosity.

II. Nor, again, are the difficulties of Judaism removed by Christianity. The Gospel gives us no advantages, in mere barren knowledge, above the Jew, or above the unenlightened heathen.

III. Nay, we may procced to say, further than this, that it increases our difficulties. It is, indeed, a remarkable circumstance, that the very revelation that brings us practical and useful knowledge about our souls, in the very act of doing so, may (as it would seem), in consequence of doing so, bring us mysteries. We gain spiritual light at the expense of intellectual perplexity; a blessed exchange doubtless, still at the price of perplexity. As we draw forth many remarkable facts concerning the natural world which do not lie on its surface, so by meditation we detect in revelation this remarkable principle, which is not openly propounded, that religious light is intellectual darkness.

IV. Such being the necessary mysteriousness of Scripture doctrine, how can we best turn it to account in the contest which we are engaged on with our own evil hearts? Difficulties in revelation are expressly given to prove the reality of our faith. They are stumbling-blocks to proud, unhumbled minds, and were intended to be such. Faith is unassuming, modest, thankful, obedient. Those that believe not fall away; the true disciples remain firm, for they feel their eternal interests at stake, and ask the very plain and practical, as well as affectionate, question, "To *whom* shall we go" if we leave Christ?

J. H. NEWMAN, *Parochial and Plain Sermons*, vol. i., p. 203.

REFERENCES: iii. 11.—J. Keble, *Sermons from Ascensiontide to Trinity*, p. 332. iii. 12.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. iv., p. 401; R. S. Candlish, *The Gospel of Forgiveness*, p. 1.

Chap. iii. ver. 13.—"The Son of Man, which is in heaven."

RESURRECTION the Key to the Life of Christ.

Resurrection is the natural, inevitable issue of the life of the Man of Sorrows, the Lord of glory. Unless the universal life is one great tragedy, that life which from the first moment of its conscious activity had looked on, though it would not press on, to Calvary, could not find the term of that conscious activity in the rock-hewn tomb, where loving hands laid the crucified body of their Lord.

I. It was the force supplied by faith in the resurrection and reign of the Man Christ Jesus, the Man who had led a sinless and absolutely self-sacrificing life on earth, and who rose in Divine strength to make the power by which He lived and died the conqueror of sin and selfishness in man—it was just this force which lifted humanity out of the slough wherein it was fast settling, and gave to it a firm, rock-like foundation, on which it could build victoriously the temple of its higher life. It needed superhuman power, through the supernatural fact—the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus—to lay hold on the corrupt and dying world with a grasp strong enough to lift it, and to begin, by underbuilding it with a solid foundation of Divine truth, the work of its salvation.

II. None can read the great biography thoughtfully without feeling that the life which it portrays had the shadow of death on it from the first. And yet—and this is the transcendently wonderful feature—the atmosphere about it, the sentiment of it, was always of life, and never of death. There was no trace of habitual gloom hanging about the daily pathways of the Lord. All breathed the expression of vivid, intense, energetic, blessed, victorious life. Always the abiding thing, the victorious thing, the beautiful Divine thing, in the word and the work of the Man of Sorrows, is life. His life was entirely healthful, robust and hopeful, though Gethsemane and Calvary were clearly at the end of it. The life was never stronger, fuller, deeper in the springs than when He looked full face on death. What could such a life, what could such a death, as His mean but resurrection? Life was bursting through death as the agony deepened, and when, with the words, "It is finished," He gave up the ghost, the only thing that died was death.

J. BALDWIN BROWN, *The Risen Christ the King of Men*, p. 77.

REFERENCES: iii. 13.—*Preacher's Monthly*, vol. ix., p. 203; Spurgeon, *Evening by Evening*, p. 85; A. Barry, *Cheltenham College Sermons*, p. 344; H. Wace, *Expositor*, 2nd series, vol. ii., p. 196. iii. 14.—R. D. B. Rawnsley, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxxii., p. 141.

Chap. iii., vers. 14, 15.—**"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."**

CONSIDER some of the lessons of Gospel truth which seem to be foreshadowed in the story of the brazen serpent.

I. There was contained in it a significant intimation that Christ would die. I say *significant*, because to these Israelites it could hardly be a direct and positive intimation. They must connect it with other types and prophecies, intimating that it would be by His own death that the Seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and then the death of Him who was to be their Saviour would be not unaptly represented by hanging the acknowledged type of Him upon a pole. As used in the conversation with Nicodemus, however, there is no doubt about the point of the reference. But it would not be—or, at least, to him, as a master in Israel, it ought not to be—any mystery that the Messiah Prince should be cut off out of the land of the living.

II. A second Gospel truth conveyed by this history is, that salvation does not come to us through Christ being lifted up *merely*, but through our looking to Him when He is lifted up. God forces salvation upon no man. It is ready, it is free, it is within the compass of all; but it must be sought. Like some among the Israelites, we would fain have the brazen serpent brought down from the pole, to touch us, and heal and give life to us, against our will. But this would not Moses, this would not God. "*Look* unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

III. "And it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." How so? Suppose he beheld it carelessly and without faith, and, as it were, in indolent curiosity, just to see what this new thing was, —did he live then? Clearly not. That look must have been a believing look, an obedient look, a look which, casting all carnal reasoning behind, makes its fearless and trusting venture on the word of promise, that "whosoever believeth on Him should not perish." Faith is a command. At the first opening of the eyes we must believe; when the earth is quaking beneath us, and the door of the eternal world is standing ajar, and despair and death are about to claim us for their own, there is nothing for us but to believe.

J. MOORE, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 3,390.

REFERENCES: iii. 14, 15.—J. Natt, *Posthumous Sermons*, p. 192; *Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. ix., p. 45; E. Cooper, *Practical Sermons*, vol. i., p. 126; *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. viii., p. 222; J. Foster, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xviii., p. 380; W. Walters, *Ibid.*, vol. xx., p. 237; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 114; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. iii., No. 153. iii. 14-17.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. vii., p. 294. iii. 14-18.—*Ibid.*, vol. xii., p. 91.

Chap. iii., ver. 16.—"**For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.**"

I. A DIFFICULTY arises in considering this text. If God so loved the world, why did He allow the fall of man. I answer, Never was a kinder act in God's whole government than that fall of man. For, from what did He fall? A garden. To what does he rise? A heaven. But how can a loving Father permit so much pain, and sin, and misery among His creatures? Two keys unlock that mystery. (1) One is Christ. This world of ours was made to be a platform for the manifestation of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will never read rightly the history of this earth till you adopt that as your first principle—this world was made to be a platform to show Christ. To that manifestation of Christ in His redeeming work, pain, and sin, and misery were absolutely essential. (2) The other key is eternity. We do not yet know how that world will explain and rectify this. We do not yet know how the discipline of this world is bringing out the joy of another; and how the rough and noisy quarry of this Lebanon is giving effect to that temple which is now rising in its calmness upon the hill of Zion. When we behold all its balanced action, and its perfect unity, and its grand results, I am quite sure that we shall say of it all, "God is love."

II. God does not give many things. He lends many; and what He lends, He recalls. He lends everything that has not Christ in it; and therefore He recalls everything that has not Christ in it. But Christ, and what has Christ in it, He never recalls. A Christian affection—a Christian union—a Christian peace—He never recalls! Christ fills it. God gave Christ; therefore that affection, that peace, that union is for ever and ever. You will observe that the promise is twofold—one negative and the other positive. (1) The negative we owe, strictly speaking, to the death of Christ. Our punishment having passed on to Christ, it would not be just in God to punish us also, for that would be punishing the same sin twice. (2) The positive boon, our admission into heaven, we owe to the meritorious righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is imputed to us. And when in that righteousness, we have an actual claim, even the same claim that Christ has, of admission into the heavenly kingdom, because we carry Christ's own claim—His righteousness imputed to us.

J. VAUGHAN, *Sermons*, 1865.

Chap. iii., vers. 16, 17.

THE Atonement.

I. As one of the wisest of the heathens said, everything has two handles—one by which it may, and one by which it may not, be taken hold of. The handle by which this blessed truth of the Atonement should be taken hold of is that which Christ Himself pointed out to us. It is the moral—it is the practical—handle of it, not the theological, not the speculative. We need the doctrine, surely, as a comfort, and not as an anathema. We need it as a bond of unity, not as a test of difference. We need it as an incentive to holiness, not as a source of rancour.

II. There is a side of the Atonement which, when we contemplate, we can understand, and not only understand, but adore; for it is revealed to us not only on its transcendent side, but also on its human side—not only in its relations to God, but also in its effects on man. And on this side you will see, if you search your Bibles, that there are mainly four metaphors by which it is shadowed forth. The Atonement of Christ is described (1) as a sin offering; (2) as our reconciliation to God; (3) as a ransom from slavery; (4) as the release from a debt which it was wholly beyond our power to pay. Now here we have no doubt, no mystery, only blessing and peace. Christ is our sin-offering. When the ancient Israelite had brought his sin-offering, and seen the flame consume it on the altar, he believed that in some way, he knew not how, his sin would be forgiven; but for us, Christ, by the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God. Christ is our reconciliation, not in type and shadow, but in very truth. He, as a mediator, stands in the place of God to man, and in the place of man to God. Christ is our ransom. Would you be grateful to one who, finding you chained in a dungeon, broke your chains and flung open your prison doors? Here is a redemption which delivers you from the captivity of sin and Satan, the worst of all captivities. Christ paid our heavy debt. If with a hearty repentance and true faith we turn to Him, the debt—the debt of the horribly wasted and desecrated past—the debt of the miserably blighted and wasted present—is cancelled, and we are free.

F. W. FARRAR, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 1,024.

REFERENCES: iii. 16.—G. Brooks, *Outlines of Sermons*, p. 6; *Homilist*, vol. iv., p. 112; *Ibid.*, new series, vol. ii., p. 526; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. i., p. 424; J. Keble, *Sermons for Holy Week*, p. 400; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xxxi., No. 1,850; R. Glover, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. xxi., p. 170. iii. 16-21.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 274; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. ii., p. 271.

Chap. iii., ver. 18.—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the Name of the only begotten Son of God."

In this text unbelief in Christ is represented as a positive crime—a crime with which, in point of enormity, no other form of human sinfulness can be compared—a crime which not only fastens upon its subject the guilt, and binds him over to the penalty of all his other sins, but which is itself the fullest and most striking development of enmity against God and opposition to His government which can possibly be presented.

I. Note the new circumstances and position in which the Gospel of Christ places every one of its subjects. We are here upon trial for an eternal world. Pardon is offered to us as a free gift from Him who has magnified the law and made it honourable; and everything now turns upon simple faith in Jesus Christ, upon an accordance with God's plan of forgiveness, a cordial acquiescence in the principles upon which that forgiveness is offered. Now the language addressed to us is not "He that doeth these things shall live by them," but "He that believeth shall be saved."

II. It goes not a little way to aggravate the guilt of the unbeliever, that God has been pleased in His Gospel not only to state the plan through which He forgives sin, but to show also the indispensable necessity of that plan as growing out of His justice as God, and His uprightness as a moral governor. He tells us in language too plain to be misunderstood, that He can save us in no other way than through faith in His Son. The a sacrifice of Jesus Christ was a method of infinite wisdom to pay tribute of justice, while it threw the mantle of mercy over the lost.

III. The Gospel of Jesus Christ, which unbelief rejects, is the highest expression which God could give us of His grace. Unbelief stands by itself, perfectly isolated in the features of enormity which mark it as least of all sins allowing of an apology or admitting of defence. It is not a sin of ignorance, for every man under the light of truth knows it to be wrong. The convictions of his own spirit—clear, numerous, and irrepressible—often testify against him as one who sins against light and knowledge.

E. Mason, *A Pastor's Legacy*, p. 80.

References: iii. 18.—Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. vii., Nos. 361, 362; *Ibid.*, vol. xvi., No. 964.

Chap. iii., ver. 19.—"And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."

God's Condemnation of Men. Note:—

I. The principles of Divine condemnation. If we accept these words in honest simplicity we must believe that it is not for being dark, but for being content to be dark that God condemns man.

II. Pass on now to the rise of sin into conscious deeds. (1) Every act of sin darkens the light of conscience. (2) Every step decreases the power of resistance.

III. Glance at the manifestation of this principle in the coming of Christ. When the Light came, every man, who rejected Him, proved his contentment in sin.

E. L. Hull, *Sermons*, 1st series, p. 303.

References: iii. 19.—*Homilist*, new series, vol. iii., p. 348. iii. 19-24.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., pp. 162, 167.

Chap. iii., ver. 20.—"For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Notice:—

I. That the Jews, to whom our text was originally applied, hated the light, and would not come to it because their deeds were evil. Their national rejection of our Lord was the result of their national depravity. We gather enough from the incidental notices of the inspired historians to assure us that when Christ came upon earth Judæa was overrun with almost universal profligacy. No man of common feeling can read our Lord's denunciations of the Pharisees without a consciousness that a fierce, unblushing depravity must have reigned among these teachers and rulers of the people, ere the lowly and compassionate Jesus could have poured forth such a torrent of reproach. Analyse the matter as nicely as you will, you cannot avoid allowing that it was just because the darkness of the false system favoured and fostered their evil deeds, while the light of the true system poured upon their shame and required their banishment, that with a tenacity which excites our surprise, and a fierceness which moves our indignation, the Jews scorned the Saviour when He stood amongst them and displayed the credentials of a marvellous and manifold miracle.

II. The same explanation may be given of infidelity, open or concealed, among ourselves. Viciousness of practice produces

this strange preference of darkness to light. Men will not come to the light; they love darkness lest their deeds should be reproved. Conversion, in place of being desired, is literally and actually dreaded. It would be the most ill-omened message if you told the money-maker in the midst of his accumulations, or the pleasure-hunter in his revelries, or the child of ambition as he toils up the steep of preferment, that a day would soon dawn, bringing with it such a change in his feelings and character that wealth would be looked upon as dross, and voluptuousness spurned as an enemy, and distinctions fled from as dangerous and destructive, while he would count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord. Infidelity is a thing of man's own choice, and the choice results from men's own conduct. And thus the decision of our text, harsh as it may sound, and bigoted and illiberal, is, in every case, substantiated. The Jew and Gentile, the Deist, who openly denounces revelation as a forgery, and the worldling who gives it the homage of formal respect and then the contempt of a God-denying life—to all and each of these may the text be unreservedly applied: "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

H. MELVILL, *Penny Pulpit*, No. 2,585.

REFERENCE: 20, 21.—*Homiletic Quarterly*, vol. ii., p. 497.

Chap. iii., ver. 21.—"He that doeth truth cometh to the light."

I. LET us endeavour to arrive at some distinct meaning of that remarkable expression—doing truth. (1) The first thing in it is to be really in earnest. Until a man is thoroughly in earnest about his soul God will have nothing to do with him. But as soon as a man is really in earnest, the work is almost half done; at all events, the result is safe. (2) A man who is doing truth has begun to draw to Christ. He makes much of Christ. He begins to feel the power and beauty of Christ. He is learning to depend upon Christ; to find Christ in everything. (3) To do truth is to be very practical in religion. It is not only to hold Christ; but to carry out Christ into daily life. It is true that actions are the results of feelings; but every one who would have lightened feelings must do actions. Whoever will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine.

II. Of this character God says he is coming to the light. For there are assimilations in moral truth, as there are in

nature, and wherever there is an assimilation, there is an attraction. This man has some light, and therefore he is under the influence of light! Light draws him. There is a principle in him which must be always running up to the Fountain from which this principle sprang. This man who comes to the light is daily growing in the beautiful grace of transparency of character. The nearer he gets to the light, the more transparent he is. His whole being can now bear examination. He loves truth; he courts truth; he is truth. There is reality in that man. You may weigh his words; you may scrutinise his actions: for he is learning to walk as a child of light. Up and up towards the very Fountain of light he is daily travelling. He is not light, but he is coming to the light. In greater nearness to Jesus every day; in more constant communion with Him; with more of His presence; in more of His image; he is striving to live to Him. Christ is a centre around which he moves continually, in a closer and a closer circle, coming to the light! He to Christ; Christ to him. The affinity grows stronger and stronger.

J. VAUGHAN, *Fifty Sermons*, 2nd series, p. 251.

REFERENCES: iii. 23-36.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. ix., p. 184. iii. 24.—*Ibid.*, vol. xi., p. 235. iii. 29, 30.—J. Stoughton, *Christian World Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 395.

Chap. iii., ver. 30.—"He must increase, but I must decrease."

LOOK at these words—

I. As the language of true nobility of character. Is it not refreshing to come across a really great man, a man who has too much of Christ within him ever to be ignoble? John's language here is not the language of sullen acquiescence. It does not need any grace to talk in that strain. It is not—"Well, He must increase, and I must decrease; and I cannot help it." No, it is the language of joy, "This my joy, therefore, is fulfilled." It is the lack of this spirit which gives rise to so many splits in our churches. It is the want of this great-heartedness which takes away the power for testimony, and causes that wretched smallness of soul which cannot rejoice in the success, or the greater success, of another.

II. As the language of prophetic utterance, "He must increase—on and on and ever increasing—and I must decrease." John was the last of the prophets who foretold the coming of the

kingdom of Christ. He was the forerunner, the herald of Christ, and now that the Messiah had come forth to found His kingdom, John's mission was fulfilled. This is his last sermon. He cried, "Behold the Lamb of God!"

III. As the language of a believer's heart. We commence life with all of self and none of Christ. It is the "I" in our aims, in our thoughts, in our conversation, in our actions, it is self we worship, self we admire, self we seek, and self we serve. But in the day of conversion Jesus Christ comes into the heart, and then there is Christ and "I" within the same breast. There is a new nature, and there is an old. It is the house of David waxing stronger and stronger, while the house of Saul waxes weaker and weaker. If I am being sanctified, Christ will occupy more and more of my thinking power. Thoughts concerning Christ and His kingdom will flow with ever-increasing volume through the channel of my mind. As Christ increases self must decrease.

A. G. Brown, *Penny Pulpit*, new series, No. 1,065.

This text contains a great principle—the principle on which God governs His children, always and everywhere. God's manifest purpose is, to keep His children humble, to make our Saviour everything and ourselves nothing. We are empty; in Him dwells all fulness. We are weak, in Him is Almighty strength. We can bring to Him only our guilt, our cares, our sorrows, our poor unworthy selves. In Him is everything—grace and peace and hope and life, wisdom and sanctification and complete redemption. And it is a great and happy Christian attainment, if we can with our whole heart assent to this. We have in these words—

I. The way to be saved. You know how natural it is for us all to think that we can do something or suffer something that may recommend us to God; that may make some amends for our sin against Him. We must decrease from that; that would be saving ourselves. We must learn and feel in our heart, that we can do nothing to make amends to the law we have broken; that we must be forgiven, if forgiven at all, of God's free grace, and for our Redeemer's sake. We must decrease, as regards our merit before God, and as regards our estimate of our merit and ourselves before God to nothing; and our Saviour must increase till He is felt to be all in all.

II. The rule of a holy and happy life. Here is the secret of

great usefulness. Here is the thing that will keep us kindly, unenvious, and unsoured in spirit; to utterly cast our self-seeking, self-assertion, self-conceit, to quite forget ourselves and our own importance and advancement, and with a single heart to think of our God and Saviour, and of the advancement of His glory in the saving and comforting of souls. Just in proportion to the degree in which you cease to think of self, and with a single eye make your Master's glory your great end, will be the good you will do. There is nothing that goes home to the hearts of people you try to influence for good, like the conviction that you are not thinking of yourself at all; but that you are thinking of them, and of Christ's glory in their advantage and blessing here and hereafter. It is not the fussy person trying to do good, but with much self-consciousness and self-conceit mingling with all his doings—it is not that man who will do most good. It is rather the humbler servant whose whole life says, "Now I am not working for effect; I don't care what you think of *me;* I am aiming at your good and Christ's glory only." For that humble servant, without perhaps ever thinking of it, has caught the sublime spirit of one concerning whom his Saviour said that a greater was never born of woman; and whose words about his Saviour were these, spoken ungrudgingly and with all his heart: "He must increase; but I must decrease."

A. K H. B., *Graver Thoughts of a Country Parson,* 2nd series, p. 36.

Let us try to enter into the spirit of that deep and affectionate loyalty to our Lord, which is everywhere to be seen in the Holy Baptist's character. I mean his not thinking of himself, but of his Master; giving up everything to His glory; rejoicing, as he went on, to find that Jesus Christ every day was showing Himself more and more glorious above him, and throwing him quite into the shade. His "burning and shining light" was to be put out and disappear, like a star, when the sun arises. And he is glad and thankful to have it so; like Jonathan, who truly rejoiced in seeing David by degrees mounting up to the kingdom which, according to earthly ways of thinking, Jonathan might have looked for himself.

I. This loyal and self-devoted feeling St. John here expresses in words; but his whole life and conduct before had expressed it, to a considerate mind, quite as clearly. All his doctrine ran upon this; that neither his preaching nor his baptism was anything at all in itself, but only to prepare the way for the perfect

Gospel, the spiritual Baptism, which Jesus Christ should set up afterwards. It may seem suitable to this dutiful temper of mind, that St. John, when the people asked him what they should do, referred them always to the plainest and simplest duties, the very thing, as it were, which came next in each man's way. In every instance the advice which he gives was as plain and simple as could be, not at all leading them to think of him, nor of any particular wisdom or goodness that was in him, but only to glorify God in their stations by sincere obedience. So again, the Baptist never shrank from showing people the severe side of the truth. "The wrath to come," "the unquenchable fire," "the axe laid to the root of the tree,"—these are the things of which he continually kept putting people in mind; but these are not the subjects on which he would have delighted to dwell, had he desired to please and attract his hearers, or to obtain personal influence and authority with them. But in this respect, as in all others, the Forerunner of Christ was like His Apostles after Him: he preached not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord.

II. Finally, in the last of his trials, his imprisonment through the malice of Herodias, we find him still of the same mind, still careful to turn all, as well as he could, to the preparing of Christ's way; still anxious to put himself down and exalt his Master and Saviour. For this purpose, having heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples with the question: "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?" He could not be ignorant who Jesus was, after what he had seen at His Baptism; but no doubt his intention was, to show his disciples the truth concerning Him. Thus he died, as he had lived, pointing out Jesus to men. Now there is one point in particular which we may well learn this day, from considering John the Baptist's character; namely, that in such measure as we are duly preparing to meet Christ when He comes to be our Judge, in the same measure we shall be still practising to humble ourselves more and more—to think less of what we do or have done, and more of Him and His unspeakable mercies. We shall no longer anxiously and grudgingly count the minutes, the hours which we spend on serving Christ in His Church, but every little time we can win for that holy employment, away from the world, we shall reckon it clear gain. The more we can give, the more yet shall we contrive to spare; every step in any kind of holiness will be to us like a step upwards on a high mountain, revealing to our sight fresh blessings and fresh duties

beyond what we had ever dreamed of, until the last and most blessed step of all shall land us in the Paradise of God.

Plain Sermons by Contributors to "Tracts for the Times," vol. vi., p. 129.

REFERENCES: iii. 30.—F. D. Maurice, *The Gospel of St. John*, p. 101; J. A. Hessey, *Church of England Pulpit*, vol. vi., p. 8; H. M. Butler, *Harrow Sermons*, p. 202; *Preacher's Monthly*, vol. iv., p. 301; J. Keble, *Sermons for Saints' Days*, p. 268; J. E. Vaux, *Sermon Notes*, 4th series, p. 84; Spurgeon, *Sermons*, vol. xvii., No. 102. iii. 31-6.—*Homilist*, 3rd series, vol. x., p. 143. iii.—*Homiletic Magazine*, vol. xii., p. 109; *Clergyman's Magazine*, vol. i., p. 239.

END OF VOL. VII.

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